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Realigning Revolution: The Poetics of Disappointment in Cuban and Angolan Narrative

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Realigning Revolution: The Poetics of Disappointment in Cuban and Angolan Narrative

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This dissertation traces how Cuban and Angolan novels published in the final decades of the twentieth century engage with the political and artistic projects promoted by and through the post-revolutionary socialist-aligned political systems. The dissertation sustains that there are a collection of textual practices that insert themselves into the official "orthodox" historiographic and literary debates by reconsidering not just historical moments in the past that are central to these debates, but also reference how these moments are written and read from an official point of view. By employing tactics of ironic citation, parody and anachronism, these works not only comment upon official readings of history and demands of post-revolutionary literature, but they also reveal "silences," to use Rolph-Trouillot's term, in the literary corpus and in the experiences of Angolan and Cuban people that these alternative corpuses represent. Through revision of official discourses, they present an alternative reading of present subjects' interactions with the past.

These practices, which together I have termed "poetics of disappointment," allow an intervention into the discussions surrounding both the production and the criticism of contemporary Cuban and Angolan literatures from a variety of political perspectives. The dissertation analyzes Cubans Alejo Carpentier's *La consagración de la primavera*, Reinaldo Arenas' *La loma del ángel* and Eliseo Alberto's *Caracol Beach* as well as Angolans Manuel Rui's *Memória de mar*, J. E. Agualusa's *Nação crioula* and Boaventura Cardoso's *Mãe, materno mar*. On one hand, these works recall the monumental events that the Cuban Revolution and Angolan independence represented, evoking a collective optimism and sense of community forged among *pueblos*/ *povos* in the processes of decolonization and promoting movements for social justice. On the other hand, the novels analyzed point out the limits of programmatic interpretations of post-revolutionary history. Demonstrating positions of discomfort with the notions of messianic immanence, idealized racial synthesis and the aftermaths of violence and displacement that official sources rarely document, these novels both privilege and question literary creation as a way of negotiating this disappointment.

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Chapter 1: A Shared History? Decolonization, African Solidarity and Literature's Politics: Backgrounds

INTRODUCTION

In September of 2007, Angolan president Eduardo dos Santos made a state visit to Havana, meeting with Cuban president Raúl Castro in order to renew the official ties that had been established between the two nations after 1975. While Cuban troops saw the birth of the modern Angolan state at its independence from colonial Portuguese control in 1975, Angola also serves as a historical point of reference to Cuba's history of slavery. Dos Santos' remark that "la amistad (entre Cuba y Angola) ha sido forjada con sangre [the friendship (between Cuba and Angola) has been forged with blood]" ("Presidente De Angola Agradece a La Habana Su Apoyo Militar") evokes not only Cuba's military, technical and humanitarian assistance to Angola's MPLA party from 1975-1991, but also recalls the renewed importance of African diasporic heritage and resulting creolized cultures in both Cuban and Angolan national narratives after their respective revolutions.

The long fight for African decolonization and its intersections with the polarizing ideological and rhetorical divides of the Cold War converged in the Angolan war. The conflict that sought to divide the word into Communist-allied and Western-allied camps was escalating during a parallel period of the fights for decolonization in Africa. The frequent alliance of first-generation national liberation leaders with the socialist camps was further strengthened in the Portuguese colonies through the Portuguese Communist Party's support for decolonization as part of the terms under which the *Estado Novo*

dictatorship (1933-1974) was being protested. What began in Angola as a multi-faceted anti-colonial armed rebellion after 1961 ended up representing a "hot" Cold War conflict, when the colonial war turned into civil war after Angola's independence. The many regional and national liberation movements were distilled into a two-party Cold War conflict: the communist-aligned Cuba fighting with the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) primarily with Soviet support against its rivals Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA) and União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) party coalition supported by invading pro-Apartheid South African forces (and clandestinely by the United States). This invasion was generally interpreted as the West's best chance to stop the spread of communism in Africa that was associated with anti-colonial and anti-Apartheid rebellion.

As might be expected, this period of ideological agreement and close political ties between Cuba and Angola during the conflict of 1975-1991 resulted in more than a military exchange. Cuba sponsored thousands of African students on the island and sent teachers, engineers and doctors to Angola to fill the technical voids left when Portuguese personnel abandoned the country in 1975. Angola's politicians and intellectuals expressed their gratitude publically, and the two writers unions signed an agreement of mutual publication in 1976. Cuba officially exited Angola triumphantly in 1991 leaving in place the Bicesse Accords, a cease-fire agreement signed by the Cuba, Angola and South Africa in 1988 (Gleijeses 103) that outlined the process to presidential and parliamentary elections in 1992. The outbreak of violence and return to armed conflict that followed the elections and continued until UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi's death in

2002, however, points to a host of simmering undercurrents that disrupt the official Cuban narrative of revolutionary triumph.

Defying the official positions of both the socialist-aligned Cuban and Angolan governments are texts that complicate the patriotic stories told on both sides of the Atlantic celebrating the internationalist alliance. In the years since final Cuban withdrawal from Angola and the 1992 failure of the ceasefire between the MPLA and UNITA, literary, journalistic and testimonial works that criticize both the political justifications for the war as well as the way it was conducted have slowly trickled into the public sphere. Taking advantage of both domestic and international publishing venues to disseminate a wider range of commentary upon the war, works in this vein appear on both sides of the Atlantic from authors both exiled from and residing in Angola and Cuba: from the jaded veteran Carlos, a character confined to a wheelchair after his service in Angola in Cuban Leonardo Padura Fuentes' Mario Conde detective series (1991-2003) to Cuban doctor Miguel Pinto Pereira's memoirs *O ano em que devia morrer*, (2008) to the senseless chaotic violence represented in Angolan Sousa Jamba's semi-autobiographical *Patriots* (1990) to the disruption that a constant background of violence brings to the family of protagonists in Peptela's *Parábola do cágado velho* (2006). Cuban journalist Ivette Leyva Martínez's blog project, "La Última Guerra [The Last War]," collects photos, news items and first-person testimonies of Cuban, Angolan and South African participants in the conflict. In the section titled "Reencuentros [Reencounters]," open to the public to post requests for information or contacts, the conflicting aftermath of the war is dramatized: while poster "Caminante" signs off

wishing luck to his/ her fellow veterans and to the "noble pueblo angolano [noble Angolan people]" the poster who identifies as **"**Rogelio Gonzalez Exposito" laments that "Angola destruyó mi vida [Angola destroyed my life]," while "Caminante" returns to cite Cuban journalist, dissident and veteran of Angola Guillermo Fariñas in calling the conflict "la épica del desengaño[1] [the epic of disappointment][2]" (Leyva Martínez). Following Fariñas' near death after a prolonged hunger strike to protest his persecution for political dissidence, Jossianna Arroyo asks, "¿Cuánto vale el cuerpo de un preso? ¿De un preso político? ¿De un preso político negro? [How much is the body of a prisoner worth? A political prisoner? A black political prisoner?]" (Arroyo Martínez "Cuánto vale el cuerpo"). In Fariñas' imprisonment, questions of post-revolutionary racial politics, solidarity and dissidence, and the Cold War aftermath converge. Arroyo's question points to the intersections of racial identity, political alliances and the violence of war that come together in Cuba's and Angola's prolonged political and ideological ties.

Angola and Cuba in the late twentieth century share a common state-sanctioned ideology of socialist-aligned revolutionary government and a history of Iberian colonialism and its attendant involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave that has resulted in creolized cultural practices and national identities. These similar histories served as the basis for the military alliance between the two nations. Nonetheless, the generally cynical

[1] The word "desengaño," according to the *Diccionario de la Real Academica Española*, means "Conocimiento de la verdad, con que se sale del engaño o error en que se estaba [Knowledge of the truth, with which one leaves behind a deception or error]" *RAE, Diccionario De La Real Academia Española*, 2011, Real Academia Española. Web. 27 Mar. 2011. It is most frequently translated as "disappointment."
[2] As frequently occurs in online forums, these comments contained several typographical errors which I have corrected in the text to facilitate reading. The quotes from the last two comments cited above as they originally appear in the blog read: "Agola destrullo mi vida" and "la epica del desengano"

opinions on the part of the United States-allied West from the 1970s through the fall of the Soviet Union cast, at best, Cuba's Angolan missions as a para-colonial venture used to expand the influence of the Cuban Revolution and its ideology (Hatzky; Nazario), and at worst, Cuba and Angola as Soviet puppets working to undermine democracy and free-market capitalism in Africa after decolonization (Valenta; DePalo). However, as dos Santos' 2007 pronouncement implies, echoing a similar sentiment expressed in a speech by Fidel Castro in 1976, the parallels between the two nations and their cultural points of contact are much more complex than the common slavish adherence to a shared political doctrine.

If intellectuals in Cuba and Angola shared a common "enthusiasm" for a utopian view of the future in the early years after revolutionary change, the accompanying crises of enforced political orthodoxy in Cuba and continuing civil conflict in Angola produced parallel expressions of "desencanto," "desengaño" / "desengano," or "desilusión" / "desilusão" with the revolutions, collected in this dissertation under the English term "disappointment". While the English word "disappointment" carries the sense of failure to accomplish or failure to live up to, the Spanish and Portuguese terms "desencanto," "desengaño" / "desengano" or "desilusión" / "desilusão" each suggest having been made to believe something which is then revealed to be false, an "encanto," "ilusión" / "ilusão" or "engaño" / "engano"; an enchantment, illusion or a trick. What the three terms share is the point of reference of another possibility which has not come to pass, or has dissipated leaving behind a failed promise. The English term "disappointment," to which each of the three Spanish and Portuguese terms can be translated, (along with their more specific

equivalents, "disenchantment" or "disillusionment"), while encompassing the possibilities of the other terms, also implies in its etymology a specific relationship to one's surroundings. In the introduction to her study of affect in British Romantic poetry, *The Poetics of Disappointment: Wordsworth to Ashbury*, Laura Quinney summarizes this sense of the term:

> In its first use, disappointment meant 'to undo the appointment of; to deprive of an appointment, office of possession' [O.E.D., 1483]. Disappointment in this sense entails losing one's hold on public identity and public space, losing a goal for one's energies and an occupation for one's time. Most primitively, disappointment meant ceasing to be '*à point*,' in the right place at the right moment, and thus implied a breakdown in one's relation to time, a falling out and away from a recognizable order. (1)

While referring to an entirely different context and to texts in a different language than the ones analyzed here, Quinney's definition of "disappointment" is helpful in concisely signaling the particular stakes of the novels discussed in the following chapters. Considering the engagement of works of "disappointment" with the very public collective ideologies of post-revolutionary Cuba and Angola, it is a perhaps a particularly helpful term used to think about the counter-points that these works of literature imply against the "official positions," offered as definitive of the authors' particular public spheres. This is not to imply that the Spanish and Portuguese terms are inadequate, or would not be best used in other contexts (particularly when discussing these works using the languages in which they are written), but rather that this analysis takes advantage of a

term that both implies the interested involvement, as well as the criticism and dismantling of the "encanto," "ilusión"/ "ilusão" or "engaño" / "engano" implied in the prefixes "dis" / "des".

In this sense, literary works of "disappointment" evidence, together with "orthodox" works of ideological alignment, a shared engagement with their surrounding socio-political spaces. These relationships to official ideology[3] shift valences after the events of 1989-1991, which brought an end to the Cold War and ushered in a new period of economic crisis in Cuba, known as the "Período Especial en Tiempos de Paz" [Special Period in Times of Peace], and the renewed civil violence in Angola after the failure of the 1989 ceasefire. Literature of "desencanto" in both places is usually discussed in terms of literary periodization, referring to works published after these watershed years, and that focuses on the everyday struggles and difficulties of living in times and places of crisis. However, this dissertation argues that literature of "disappointment" does not begin with the crises of the 1990s, although it includes them, but rather arises virtually together with works of ideological "orthodoxy" as critical tool for discussing and disputing the directions of orthodox historiographic rhetoric. In so doing, they do not necessarily reject the premises of their respective revolutionary alliances, but also undermine these revolutionary movements' tendency to replace Western / colonial grand

[3] The time frame of the novels discussed in this dissertation runs from 1979-2001. Thus, the official parallel "communist" or "socialist" periods of Angola and Cuba occurs officially between 1975-1992; while the single party in Cuba remained communist after the demise of the USSR, the events from 1989-1991 in Angola brought an end to an official identity with communism on the part of the MPLA. Nonetheless, because the novels here engage diverse historical periods and the ways that these periods are represented in the historiographies of the socialist convergence, we will place the novels from Angola and Cuba in the 1970s-2000s together under the common term of "post-revolutionary."

historical narratives with similarly positivistic and utopian socialist identified ones. They have in common with the internationalist alliances that are emphasized in both Cuban and Angolan official rhetoric of the 1970s and 1980s a tendency to look outside of vertical relationships between the former colonies and colonial and imperial powers, to assess literary models and provoke conversations horizontally.

Cuba's and Angola's colonial histories and conflict-ridden relationships with the world super-powers and their Western allies often overpower the significant influence of horizontally-configured alliances, however. In each of the novels discussed in the following chapters, the texts take on problems of cultural mixing and transformation, through histories that simultaneously reference the colonial pasts, revolutionary presents and uncertain futures of the two nations. Thus, notions of cultural *mestizaje / mestiçagem*, or *crioulidade* / *mulataje*, uneasy symbols of both utopia and dystopia, can take on both the radical national and international change in the global South promised by post-revolutionary regimes, and a self-referential criticism of how that change has not or will not come about. Relying on irony and parody as technical devices, these novels destabilize teleological projections of a revolutionary future, without leaving behind a concern for the political situations that ushered in revolutionary change.

The chapter will proceed in three parts. First, it will take up the historical novel genre as a kind of text that reflects on the relationship between history and the government-sanctioned alliance between artistic production and political discourses. Next, it will address the historical links forged between Cuba and Angola through the 1960s and 1970s as part of larger pro-socialist, anti-colonialist and anti-racist world

movements. By referencing a demand through official outlets for artistic production to reflect the priorities of the revolution, these novels of "disappointment" undercut that alliance by point out the overlapping relationships among those discourses using the devices of irony and parody. Irony and parody are privileged precisely because of their explicit citation of works, figures, texts and discourses that the text recognizes and destabilizes. Finally, our analysis will return to the historical impact of notions of cultural mixing as they are treated in the Revolution to suggest that these novels of "disappointment" refer to such notions as a way to both signal social problems that remain unresolved in their post-revolutionary societies and to sidestep totalizing conceptions of socialist alliance and nationalist rhetoric. This final section will outline the primary features of these novels, and thus map the direction of the three chapters that follow.

HISTORICAL NOVELS AND REVOLUTION

This dissertation traces a "poetics of disappointment" through an analysis of late twentieth-century historical novels. The presence of disappointment or disillusionment in the novel is not unique to the Cuban or Angolan contexts, nor does it appear uniquely in the context of socialist ideology. Georg Lukács, in his extensive work on the novel genre and particularly on the historical novel, links the form to specific ideological shifts that come out of the late-Enlightenment bourgeois revolutions in Europe. For Lukács, the historical novel reflects on the "historical processes" that lead to the present reality, and serve as a kind of genealogy of "historical consciousness" through the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He traces the novel of disillusionment from the period

of European Romanticism, defining the source of "disillusionment" as the ethical conflict provoked by an individual subject's imagined utopia and inevitably failing in the necessary actions to achieve it (Lukács *Theory* 118). His dependence on Hegelian notions of progress and subsequent reliance upon the notion of the historical novel's "rational" adherence to reality posit a close correlation between sociopolitical action and the aesthetic form. As Lukács writes in the second decade after the Bolshevik Revolution, the author of the historical novel enjoys ever greater opportunity to depict the "true historical forerunners" (*The Historical Novel* 345) of contemporary events.

While Lukács' theorization of the novel is historically important, it is certainly dated, as Elisabeth Wesseling points out (29), and yet is useful in signaling two ways in which the novels of disappointment analyzed here interact with the trends governing "orthodox" revolutionary literature in both Cuba and Angola. The first stems from Lukács' focus on the verisimilitude of the historical novel, or its basis in observable reality. This notion of using literature to re-present reality in a more truthful manner is fundamental to the intellectual discussions in post-revolutionary Cuba and Angola, whose participants saw the two nations' colonial pasts as repressing popular voices and experiences whose "truths" needed to be rediscovered. Secondly, Lukácsian historical fiction focuses on the socio-political determinacy of the form. Literature of disappointment undermines orthodox works on these two fronts. It both engages with and rejects replacing one grand narrative of progress—colonial histories, for example—with another—the utopian narrative of socialist revolution. It also abandons a search for

representing a "truth" about the past, in favor of commenting upon the textual process by which that search into the past has been and is being conducted.

Hayden White argues in *Metahistory* (1973) that writing about history involves the ordered narrating of past events according to literary conventions (White), a suggestion that collapses stark distinctions between history and literature. Beyond a simple imitation of the literary form, White's notion of history suggests that the only way in which we can make sense of historical events is through narrative "tropes" that cast historical sequences according to a scheme of narratological devices that determine our interpretation of the events in question. The historical text constructs a narrative about events and people whom the historian and the reader agree have concrete referents. In this sense, as Paul Ricoeur argues, the historical text occupies a social space, in that it represents an "institution of knowledge" (Ricoeur 167) both reflective and constitutive of the social context of its production. Linda Hutcheon argues that literary works that highlight the relationship between their own textual constructs and the conventions of recording their historical referents—"historiographic metafiction"—ask their readers "to recall that history and fiction are themselves historical terms and that their definitions and interrelations are historically determined and vary with time" (Hutcheon *A Poetics of Postmodernism* 105).

Walter Benjamin argues that a look to the past always implies a "historical leap" such that past events can only be understood through their relationship to the "here and now" (Benjamin). The novels analyzed in this dissertation, novels which I argue demonstrate a "poetics of disappointment," reflect "heres and nows" that are fractured by

an uncertain confidence in the alignment between the promises of revolutionary rhetoric and the subsequent social realities in the 1970s-2000s. While they certainly could be described in part by Seymour Menton's notion of "demonumentalizing" history, they also reflect on the process of history creation while ironizing prescriptive demands to reflect an ideologically bound reality or demonstrate a certain point of view.

This dynamic works in several directions. While certainly providing commentary upon the past, as a historical novel is typically assumed to accomplish, these novels inscribe a brand of ironic discourse that makes the relationship between past and present ambiguous. In so doing, they destabilize not only the notion of a linear narration from past to present, but ironize the process by which orthodox historical narratives are created. Rather than projecting "disenchantment" with the revolutionary process because it has betrayed its "original" intent (Pepetela's *Geração da utopia* is an example of this type of novel), the works analyzed here record a disappointment with the history-making process; for them the historical immanence of the revolutionary promise is undercut by those realities which revolutionary literature cannot express.

As Ricoeur notes, the historical archive speaks not through its individual documented contents, but through the questions that the researcher brings to it (177). As much as the archive collects, however, it also evidences absences, what Michel-Rolph Trouillot terms archival "silences" (26-27). In a sense, both the literature that adheres to the revolutions in Angola and Cuba and literature that questions the direction of that adherence respond in some sense to the questions previously raised about Angolan and Cuban history through archival questions and archival silences. In addition, the use of

Cubanized Spanish and Angolanized Portuguese serve as an additional mode of commentary upon the vacillation between archival memories and archival silences, signaling how certain modes of language may be inadequate to express Cuban and Angolan geopolitical realities during and after decolonization. In reconsidering these questions, the demands of socialist-aligned and post-colonial reframing of histories converge. Novels of disappointment, however, ironize this process. Echoing the historical novel's plays with the past and the present and its overt focus on the fictionalized construction of the past from the point of view of the present, literature of disappointment must not be seen as a period *following* the production of orthodox literature but simultaneous to it. It nevertheless depends on the discourses of revolutionary orthodoxy as its points of reference; just as a textual parody depends on an "original," novels of disappointment are "writing back" against recastings of historical processes.

Irony and parody are destabilizing linguistic devices. From Bakhtin's notion of the heteroglossia inherent in parody—a text's simultaneous occupation of several social spaces or ideological points of view (Baktin) —to Jameson's emphasis on rearticulation of the same within a different ideological frame (Jameson), to the commonly held notion that an ironic utterance *means* the opposite of what it *says* (*The Routledge Dictonary of Literary Terms* 123), twentieth-century notions of these tropes reflect post-structuralist emphasis on the text. And yet, as Linda Hutcheon points out, irony and parody are necessarily politicized, and are only achieved when the interpreter makes them "happen". This implies that irony and parody are not stable features of the text, but an effect of the interplay among the text, context and reader. In any given context, irony may or may not

"happen," leaving open the possibility that the reader's interpretation may or may not fall in line with those points of view that others read as being ironized.

The potential to make irony "happen" or not is what Hutcheon terms its "edge"; because these two poetic devices both reference and potentially subvert that which they are criticizing, irony and parody can never be neutral (Hutcheon *Irony's Edge* 15). In fact, this dissertation will argue for a third aspect of the ironic text. If disappointment depends on the *encanto* of the previous vision, it does not necessarily push back against it; undermining the teleological process through which the utopian future will be realized, it fractures that vision with an ironic portrayal of the potential and the realities of post-revolutionary existence. But it does not abandon them. In ironizing or parodying how revolutionary aesthetic programs deal with distant and proximate histories, these novels of disappointment point to the failures of their respective revolutionary governments to solve problems of racism, poverty, and displacement. In their ambiguous engagement with recognizable "targets" of irony, they speak to silences imposed by official and unofficial censorship, portraying simultaneously a figure, situation or commentary that is accepted and unaccepted at the same time[4]. And yet it would be reductive to classify them as unilaterally counterrevolutionary. Indeed, the very citation of that which irony or parody undermines opens the possibility for complicity or dialogue with it. In this way,

[4] In Cuba, where the publishing industry is entirely owned and operated by the state, censorship is a reality of the Revolution. There are multiple instances of works that were published and disappeared because they were never reedited or authors who were ignored and later recuperated by official sources. See Rojas, *El estante vacío*. The case in Angola seems to be more complicated, not least because many Angolan works are published in Portugal or Brazil. There have been accusations of suppressing unpopular authors and ideas in Angola, or at least of ignoring or forgetting them. (See Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, "Um Desafio a Partir Do Sul: Uma História De Literatura Outra," *Lendo Angola*, ed. Laura Cavalcante Padilha and Margarida Calafate Ribeiro. Porto: Afrontamento, 2008.) The primary publishing venue for literature within Angola remains, as it does in Cuba, the national Writer's Union.

novels of disappointment avoid the accusation of the paradigm of post-modernist pastiche which came about in the 1980s and 1990s at the same time as their production, of these devices as devoid of political engagement. On the contrary, Hutcheon's insistence on the active engagement of the reader or interlocutor to make irony and parody "happen" point to the very real stakes that these authors see implied in the situations that I argue their texts criticize.

REVOLUTIONARY HISTORIES

Histories of colonialism, slavery and imperialism complicate these narratives. The notion of revolution—replacing one socio-political state structure for a new one through illegal means (Johnson 2)—implies a shift in hegemony, bringing along with it a shift in legal and political systems and socio-political norms. Complicating the shift in the communities who will tell these narratives after the revolution, in the context of colonial dominance, are a history of histories that are often contested and rewritten with the new ideological demands. Revolution also introduces an uncertain tension between the past and the present. If, on one hand, revolution opens up the possibility of tracing a new cultural genealogy founded upon a trajectory of resistance against colonialism (Neto 32), on the other the novel nature of the new conditions beg the question of what Ernesto "Che" Guevara calls the "original sin" of intellectuals who must transition to a new ideological context that dictates the conditions for the creation of their work. The process of this transition in Cuba after the 1959 Revolution and in Angola after 1975 independence serves as the background for these works that I define as literature of "disappointment".

While the polarizing rhetorics of the Cold War would suggest that a shared alliance to socialist ideology serves as the primary link between these two allies, remarkable parallels also exist between politically engaged works of literature that nonetheless refuse to adhere to the orthodox aesthetic projects of socialist-aligned revolution. If the historical novel serves as a kind of archival repository of both textual practices and references to concrete times and events, it also represents the foucauldian episteme—the mode of knowledge particular to its time, place and social conditions—in which it is embedded (González Echevarría *Myth and Archive* 8). However, this dissertation argues that novels of disappointment are removed one degree further from their historical points of reference. Beyond providing solely a new reading of the past informed by the present, these novels use as their point of departure—the *point* or *ilusión* against which a disappointment or *desilusión* develops—the ideological framing of literary engagement with history that the post-revolutionary projects demand.

While the works' historical referents range from a distant colonial past to the more recent socio-political developments in the final decades of the twentieth century, each of the novels references the new, imminent and messianic collective utopia for the *pueblo/ povo* projected through and after revolution that is in some way metaphorized through evoking processes of cultural mixing. While this process is sometimes represented through racial "mixing"—*mestisaje* / *mestiçagem*, *mulataje* or *crioulidade*, it also appears through syncretistic religious practices, texts and characters that travel between geographic spaces, and anachronistic confrontations. Using irony and parody to destabilize the linear utopian trajectory implied by revolutionary ideology—that is, a

system by which all past historical events lead necessarily to the utopian revolutionary future—, these novels suggest a poetics of disappointment—a collection of textual practices that undermine rhetorics of utopian euphoria and prescriptive aesthetic projects.

When Fidel Castro pronounces in 1976 that “Somos un pueblo latinoafricano [We are an Afro-Latino nation]” (Castro Ruz "XV Aniversario De La Victoria De Girón") he cites the two dominant theoretical underpinnings of internationalist alliance between Cuba and other socialist-aligned entities in the latter decades of the twentieth century: the characterization of revolution as a decolonizing strategy, and the shift toward characterizing revolutionary Cuba as an Afro-Caribbean nation. Similarly, socialist-allied revolution in Angola, as Onésimo Silveira argues, is founded primarily upon breaking the colonial structure and driving toward post-colonial independence. These two theoretical convergences are made explicit in Cuba’s alliance to the Angolan MPLA party, the socialist-aligned party that controls the Angolan government after independence in 1975. Along with the rhetoric for political independence, decolonization and worldwide black alliance, intellectuals in both locales debate the terms for aesthetic projects that supported political engagements in public forums such as newspapersand journals, public events and conferences and through literary creations.

In many cases, this debate revolved around the question of what role art should take in supporting the goals of the revolutions. In Cuba during the very early years of the revolution, diverse proposals from a variety of viewpoints, both socialist and not, sought to define what a national culture would look like, taking into consideration the popular “histories” that had been suppressed under pre-revolutionary regimes. Rojas argues that

throughout the first decade of the revolution, however, the official possibilities of national cultural products were restricted through the 1960s until "las poéticas del campo intelectual cubano se vieron restringidas por políticas basadas en versiones más o menos ortodoxas del marxismo y más o menos autoritarias del nacionalismo [the poetics of the Cuban intellectual realm were restricted by politics based on more or less orthodox versions of Marxism and more or less authoritarian of nationalism]" (Rojas 198). As we discuss below, this "orthodox" version of Marxism insists upon a close alliance between "reality" and fiction, as well as a priority placed upon recognizing voices of the oppressed or silenced by the pre-revolutionary regimes. In Angola, debates about the involvement of literature in the public sphere in the early years of the revolution were generated primarily around the construction of a national culture: what this culture would consist of, how it would be recorded and by whom, in which languages, etc. While discussions of national culture did not necessarily intersect with Marxism, much of the work published in the early years of the Angolan Writers' Union's literary journal reflected a close alliance between Marxist thinking and a liberated national culture. This priority is echoed in the Angolan intellectual António Cardoso, who writes in 1979 that while Marxism does not provide an aesthetic prescription that would "cortar as asas da imaginação e do sonho [clip the wings of imagination and dreams]," nonetheless "a luta em defesa da cultura, ao serviço do Povo, na tranformação democrática da sociedade, é a luta pela edificação do Socialismo Científico [the fight for the defense of culture, at the service of the People, for the democratic transformation of society, is the fight to build Scientific Socialism]" (A. Cardoso 7). Eschewing the *idea* of a prescriptive aesthetics,

Cardoso nonetheless suggests that the political engagement of the post-revolutionary artist will lead to a work reflective of the Marxist-driven revolutionary process in this construction of a national culture that "serves the people" of Angola.

And yet, in both locales, works abound that refuse this prescriptive political participation. While literature of disillusionment is one of the frequent modes in African countries after independence (i.e. Ahmadou Kourouma's *Les soleils des independences* [*The Suns of Independence*] [1968]) as well as in many of the Soviet-bloc and Soviet-allied countries during the 1970s-2000s, the relationship that developed between Angola and Cuba during the period of Cuban material support of the Angolan socialist-allied party from 1975-1989 deserves further examination. The "internationalist phase" of the Cuban Revolution is marked by a political shift that sought to cast Cuba as an active player in creating world socialist solidarity, providing material support to revolutionary movements in South America, Central America and Africa. These material supports for third-world socialism were accompanied by a discursive shift that sought to declare Cuba an "Afro-Latino nation" as a method of justifying and strengthening its support for African socialist projects. In the case of Angola, which represented Cuba's most involved and protracted internationalist involvement, Cuba served both as a political and aesthetic model whose influence is visible in the public sphere. As Cuba's Revolution was achieved as the post-colonial rebellions were solidifying in the Portuguese colonies, Cuba served as a revolutionary ideal whose political priorities were refracted through Angolan lenses; similarly, Cuban revolutionary literature and more generally Latin American

literature of the political left (Boom novels, for example) was widely read and admired among Angolan writers (Kandjimbo "A crioulidade não existe em Angola").

In his first major speech addressing the relationship between art and the Revolution, Fidel Castro famously declares in his 1961's "Palabras a los intelectuales [Words to Intellectuals]," "dentro de la Revolución, todo; contra la Revolución, nada [within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing]" (Castro Ruz "Palabras a Los Intelectuales") addressing specifically the question of intellectuals who were not "revolutionaries" and yet did not directly oppose the Revolution and the changes it promised. Indeed, as Rafael Rojas argues, the "enthusiasm" (citing Lyotard) that the Cuban Revolution inspired among Latin American, European and United States' intellectuals was unparalleled and yet has been described as a kind of "intellectual tourism" in that its results were seen as appropriate to Cuba but not generally mimicked in France, the United States or many other Latin American countries (Rojas *El estante vacío*). The case of the African Portuguese colonies, however, whose official colonial wars are often identified as beginning in 1961, the very year of Castro's speech, are different. While much of the analysis of the effects of the Cuban Revolution and the resulting disillusionment that spreads among leftist intellectuals both on and off the island focuses on the triad of North America-Latin America-Europe, the relationship that Cuba developed with its African allies is distinct, seen as a case of horizontal alliance among decolonizing nations seeking to escape this very triangulation.

Amílcar Cabral's 1962 speech at the First Conference of Solidarity With the People of Africa, Asia and Latin America which took place in Havana expresses not only

the admiration that anti-colonial revolutionary leaders feel toward the leadership of the Cuban Communists, but the model for independence that the post-Revolutionary Cuba represents for the Portuguese colonies:

> …nós, os povos dos países africanos ainda parcialmente ou totalmente dominados pelo colonialismo português, estamos prontos para mandar para Cuba tantos homens e mulheres quantos sejam necessários para compensar a saída daqueles que, por razões de classe ou de inadaptação, têm interesses e atitudes incompatíveis com os interesses do povo cubano. (Cabral "A Arma Da Teoria" 172)
>
> [we, the people of African countries still partially or completely dominated by Portuguese colonialism, are ready to send to Cuba as many men and women as necessary to compensate for the exodus of those who, for reasons of class or unsuitability, have interests and attitudes incompatible with the interests of the Cuban people].

This passage points to several important features of the South-South alliances that Cuba cultivated after 1959. First, as Cabral's passage makes clear, Cuba's revolution serves as an example to the global South, but particularly stands out as a model of anti-colonial liberation for those communities still subject to official colonial rule in the 1960s, especially the Portuguese colonies with well-developed left-leaning anti-colonial movements. As active participants in their own revolution, Cubans are not the

"intellectual tourists" that Rojas describes, but representatives of horizontal alliances that allow the Portuguese colonies to escape an ideological dependence on the colonial center.

A second important issue that Cabral raises is the notion of siblinghood among African people and the descendents of African peoples in the Americas. As Cabral's offer to "replace" those Cubans who flee after the Revolution indicates, the rhetoric that is developing as Cuba's Revolution is read as a decolonizing moment around the global South also participates in a politics of common identity. This is a notion that resonates not only in official political discourse, but in literary and filmic manifestations as well.

When Castro makes the declaration of Afro-Latino identity and trans-Atlantic African siblinghood, he is not only referring to the important and visible presence of Afro-Cubans, but drawing an explicit connection among the battles of the Cuban Revolution, significantly citing the Bay of Pigs invasion that solidified the socialist nature of the Revolution, and the anti-colonial battles in which Cuba participates in Angola: "en África, junto a la de los heroicos combatientes de Angola, se derramó también sangre cubana, la de los hijos de Martí, Maceo y Agramonte… La victoria de Angola fue hermana gemela de la victoria de Girón [in Africa, together with the heroic combatants of Angola, Cuban blood was also spilled, that of the sons of Martí, Maceo and Agramonte… The victory in Angola was the twin sister of the victory at Girón]" (Castro Ruz "XV Aniversario De La Victoria De Girón"). Castro's citation of these three founding figures of the first Cuban Revolution of the 1890s, José Martí, Antonio Maceo and Ignacio Agramonte, recreates this notion, using them as a metonymical reference to the Cuban people, including the Afro-Cuban military hero Maceo. The speech also

explicitly refers to the short-lived "victory" that was declared after the MPLA and Cuban alliance quelled the violence that arose after the 1975 turnover of power from Portuguese to Angolan hands, and Castro equates the Cuban defeat of U.S. troops at the Playa de Girón and the first declared end to the Angolan Civil War in 1976. In the context of the speech, both are moments not only of internationalist victory, but of African solidarity in what is cast as a worldwide anti-colonial movement uniting people of color. And yet, as a caricature of this tendency, and recalling Arroyo's pointed question regarding the value of a black body to the Revolution, the French documentary film that analyzes Cuba's African missions in Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Congo and Angola *Cuba: Une odyssée africaine* [Cuba, an African Odyssey] (2007) claims that initially black Cuban soldiers were recruited for the African operations, ostensibly in order to "blend in" better with the African populations.

The sociopolitical break that the Cuban Revolution and Angolan independence initiated presented the opportunity in both locales for a reformulation of the old relationships to the West in terms of a new culture unhinged from decadent Western (step)-ancestors. In Rojas' discussion of the multiple ways that Western inheritance were debated and denounced in the first decade following the Revolution, the official priority of leaving the West behind in order to emphasize 1959 as a moment of decolonization is solidified by 1971, at which time

> Desarrollarse y descolonizarse implicará, entonces, romper con el humanismo occidental y con la izquierda democrática del Primer Mundo. …[A]quella localización geopolítica de la isla ha sido consumada. El bárbaro que hablará

> entonces podrá mirar su entorno antillano y latinoamericano sin sentirse amenazado por una identidad subdesarrollada, que cree haber dejado atrás. (Rojas *El estante vacío* 53)

> [Development and decolonization would mean, then, breaking with Western humanism and with the democratic Left of the First World… that geopolitical location of the island had been consummated. The barbarian who speaks from then on can look at his Antillean and Latin American surroundings without feeling threatened by an identity of underdevelopment, which he believes he has left behind].

This break is dramatized repeatedly as well in Angolan letters, through characters who are able to shed, with varying degrees of success, the epistemological trappings of the old colonial system.[5] And yet, as Roberto Fernández Retamar's *Calibán* (1971) indicates, the language, metaphorical in the configuration of the modern nation and its relations to its subjects, and literal in the Spanish and Portuguese languages albeit Cubanized and Angolanized, of the colonizers remain. These symbols of a colonial past serve, even as a reminder of the past from which the revolutions seek to break, additionally as the basis for new relations formed along South-South axes of other local histories that share points of contact.

The intersections of this post-revolutionary focus on solidarity with African peoples and recognition of Afro-Cuban heritage intersects with a theoretical shift in the

[5] For example, Boaventura Cardoso's *Maio, mês de Maria* (1997).

post-revolutionary period toward a greater focus on portraying the "realities" of the social landscape both in historical and in artistic texts. These ideas are discussed both in the Cuban and Angolan contexts, and the dominant novelistic form-the social realist novel-represents extensive examples in both locales.

As Seymour Menton points out, the demands of a new revolutionary literature focused in part around representing the social realities of the Cuban people, particularly in recognizing the African influence in Cuban culture as well recognizing Afro-Cuban people within the national community. Discussing the prevalence of the historical novel after the revolution, responding to the demand of reexamining history with the new ideological tools of the Revolution (Fraginals 11), Cuban authors of the 1960s and 1970s wished to reflect the links between Africa and Cuba. Menton cites several examples of historical novels of the 1970s which reflect the common history of interventionism and the collective popular push back against such policies in the Caribbean and in Africa (Menton 918) as a way of strengthening the notion of shared identity and shared experience on both sides of the Atlantic.

In this way, the articulation of an Afro-Cuban identity serves not as a new identitary invention, but rather as a "truer" reflection of Cuba's racial past. Historian and Afro-Cuban activist Walterio Carbonell defines Cuba's past in a 1961 article as consisting of "dos pueblos llegados de dos continetes diferentes: África y Europa [two peoples who arrived from two different continents: Africa and Europe]," (185) from which Africa had been largely erased, and yet calls for the recognition that "el presente revolucionario es prueba contundente de la contribución de África a la cultura cubana

[the revolutionary present is decisive proof of Africa's contribution to Cuban culture]" (187)[6]. This notion of the immanence of the present, of the revolutionary present making clear the conditions that brought it into being is more completely defined by Ambrosio Fornet:

> el rasgo dominante de la novela de la Revolución es… la consciencia histórica… [con] su perspectiva del futuro… Cuando el futuro deja de ser una mera dimensión de lo posible y se convierte, por decirlo así en vivencia cotidiana, toda historia se hace a la vez prehistoria y utopía, la culminación y la reanudación de dos procesos simultáneas. (Fornet "Las Máscaras Del Tiempo" 62)
>
> [the dominant characteristic of the novel of the Revolution is… an historical consciousness… [with] its perspective of the future… When the future stops being a mere dimension of what is possible and becomes everyday experience, all of history turns into prehistory and utopia, the culmination and the resumption of two simultaneous processes].

These two "simultaneous processes," projecting at once both the realization of a popular utopia as well as the present as the culmination of past historical events mark both the historical and artistic projects of the post-revolutionary era. Indeed, the project

[6] I cite Carbonell here purposefully, because his thinking and his person represent the many contradictions of the Revolution's gesture toward recuperating African identity. After the publication of the cited essay, Carbonell was sent to be "reeducated" by cutting sugar cane, and never returned to prominence. According to Spanish novelist Juan Goytisolo, the essay was too "radical" for the revolutionary officials (Goytisolo), and too closely aligned with North American black power movements. However, in Carbonell's 2008 obituary in the Cuban cultural magazine *La Jiribilla*, where the essay was originally published in 1961, he is identified as having "unwavering support" for African liberation movements and for the revolutionary transformation of Cuban society; his essay was reedited in Cuba in 2004 (*La Jiribilla*).

that Fornet outlines as belonging to the revolution can equally aptly describe the ways that "heterodox" novels—those novels that engage with contemporary politics without overt participation from the official ideological revolutionary standpoint—engage with history as well, albeit through differing methodologies.

Revolutionary aesthetic and historical theory recognize a split between "official histories"—those written before the Revolution as well as those written from the standpoint of the elite—as opposed to and obscuring "popular histories" and events, peoples and groups that have been obscured, overlooked, denied or forgotten in the official textual versions. As a whole, these "historias" form the collective reality of a populace who has been exploited and underserved by a textual process in which they have not been reflected, and of which they are not the authors. This trope of oral or unwritten histories as a counterpoint to colonial textual exclusions is amply explored in works such as Algerian Assia Djebar's *L'amour, la fantasia* (1985), and reappears again in Cuban and Angolan contexts after the revolutions in literature and film, as a way of complicating straightforward notions of retelling. The debate of representation is broached in Menton's text by the suggestion that it is indeed the Cuban populace, rather than individual characters, who serve as the protagonists in the most orthodox of post-Revolutionary fictional texts.

As priorities of literature that serves the ideology of the Revolutions, then, the reflection of the social reality of the protagonists of history (the Revolution itself) as well as a positivistic gesture toward the future result in texts that privilege artistic work as a place to reflect those futures. This mediation between recasting the past, reflecting the

present and pointing to the future in the artistic text is perhaps the defining characteristic of early revolutionary literature as Fornet discusses it.

A drive to reflect the "social reality" both in its contemporary manifestations and in its historical valence in both the Cuban and Angolan contexts takes as its assumption the revolutionary impulses as constituted by a drive to decolonization, a lens through which the concern over race in post-revolutionary society takes center stage. This notion is made possible through the recasting of Cuba not only as a national body that *includes* African-descended citizens, but one that is *composed* of them. Works such as Miguel Barnet's *Biografía de un cimarrón* [*Biography of a Runaway Slave*] (1968) demonstrate such a dynamic. Barnet's novel-ethnography consists of a first-person account of the life of Esteban Montejo (1860-1973), an ex-slave who recounts his experience with plantation slavery and continued post-abolition racism in Cuba. Indeed, Barnet's positioning as author of the work who creates and authorizes a public space for Montejo's first-person voice dramatizes a similar dynamic played out in the larger social sphere of debate about culture in the revolution. As Nina Gerassi-Navarro notes, "Esta despersonalización del autor, donde 'el arte se aproxima a la ciencia'(5) es fundamental para Barnet porque permite que la 'novela-testimonial' se aleje un grado de la ficción para acercarse a la Historia [This depersonalization of the author, where 'art approximates science' (5) is fundamental for Barnet because it allows the 'testimonial novel' to distance itself to a degree from fiction in order to approach History]" (Gerassi-Navarro). Or, as Arturo Arias argues, it represents a "testimonial literature" that begs an "interdependence of literature and ethics," (Arias 54) in that it creates an historical

possibility for a particular subject through literature that would not have otherwise been articulated. The priority placed on this type of close approximation of literature and history serves both as a criticism of the pre-revolutionary imperialist / colonial systems, and points to the post-revolutionary space as both anti-racist and more truthful than its political predecessors.

However, while bringing to light the complicity between racism and colonialism before the Revolution is one of the cultural priorities of post-revolutionary literatures, the drive to present "social realities" applies equally to projecting what might be possible in the future. Alejo Carpentier's *La consagración de la primavera* [*The Rite of Spring*] (1978), analyzed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, comments upon this utopian configuration of the revolutionary future in which two of his protagonists, the dancers Calixto, an Afro-Cuban, and Mirta, his white lover and partner, might both perform their long-awaited Cubanized version of Stravinsky's ballet and be able to marry. In fact, the opportunity to present both past histories that have been suppressed or unacknowledged and current and future realities that counteract past oppressions are not only cast as the *demand* of the post-revolutionary period but its *privilege* (Castro Ruz "Palabras a Los Intelectuales").

In his introduction to Ernesto "Che" Guevara's diaries of his year spent in the Congo, Jorge Risquet explicitly places the Cuban nation as one among many African nations engaged in fighting "together with the peoples of the Congo (Brazzaville), Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa against colonialism, mercenary armies and racism" (Risquet Valdés 17). This is a notion that is repeated

through Cuban political channels, historical and social scientific accounts, documentaries, and primary documents. Indeed, it seems to be a shared sentiment around the global South as well.

Stephen Henighan, reflecting Risquet's argument for the close alliance between Cuba and African revolutionary movements, argues that Cuba serves as a "fulcrum" in the development of a trans-Atlantic revolutionary culture among Spanish and Portuguese-speaking communities. Supporting his citation of the group of young Lusophone African poets centered around Lisbon's *Casa dos estudantes do império* (House of the Students of the Empire) whose first literary magazine in 1951 was dedicated to Afro-Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén, Cuba's Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas Cubanos [UNEAC] (headed by Guillén) and Angola's União de Escritores Angolanos [UAE] sign an agreement of mutual publication in 1976, the year after Cuban forces help to secure the MPLA's status as controlling party in Angola's post-independence government.

While Henighan focuses on the specific and documented exchanges among Luso-African and Latin American intellectuals and public figures, there are additional theoretical convergences between public discussions of the intersections of revolution and culture in Cuba and Angola during the 1960s and 1970s. Seeking to explain why Cuba focused its internationalist aid and military support in Angola at the expense of earlier contacts with Congo and Guinea-Bissau / Cape Verde under the leadership of Amílcar Cabral until his assassination in 1973, Henighan proposes that the similarly creolized cultures of urban Angola and Cuba point to cultural and historical parallels that serve as the rhetorical underpinnings of the ties that develop between the two nations

(Henighan 239-40). While Henighan presents this notion as speculative, there are indeed a number of intersections in the way that Cuban and Angolan intellectuals discussed concerns for race within their revolutionary movements, which additionally point to the ways in which the literature that follows in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s respond to these discussions.

Poets and political leaders Viriato da Cruz and Mário Pinto de Andrade were instrumental in colonial Angola in the process of solidifying clandestine anti-colonial movements into a formal MPLA party in 1956, with eventual Angolan president Agostinho Neto as the party's head. All three were also active participants in the intellectual circuit represented in such events as the African and Asian Writers Conferences and published both literary work and essays in international journals of black culture such as *Présence africaine*, the premier international forum in which cultural and political issues of African and diasporic identity were being discussed. Indeed, their participation in these two enterprises serves as an example of the turn toward solidarity with Africa and the diaspora; while originally a French language publication at its founding in 1943, *Présence Africaine* later began an English-language edition, expanding its audience. Its focus on bringing into conversation discussions on cultural expression originating on the continent and in the diaspora meant that it "has consistently provided a platform for the multiplicity of ideologies and ofttimes conflicting currents of throught that Blacks have espoused in their attempts to define themselves, affirm their identity, reclaim their history and heritage, and forge paths to

freedom" (Hill-Lubin 164). Thus da Cruz and Pinto de Andrade's participation in this enterprise puts them into conversation with voices from the diaspora, including Cuba.

In "Des responsabilités de l'intellectuel noir [The responsibilities of black intellectuals]," published in 1959, Viriato da Cruz argues for the centrality of cultural production to political revolution. Pointing not only to the importance of the formation of a collective black identity, as *negritude*[7] had done, da Cruz argues that the *process* of cultural production is a primary arm in the fight against colonialism, not only because European culture had been a primary arm of colonialism: "Il est indispensable et plus important de savoir aussi si le people colonisé a la possibilité de prendre dans la culture du colonisateur ce qui l'intéresse, quand et comme cela lui convient, pour l'utiliser en accord avec ses propres necessités [It is vital, and more important to know whether the colonized people can take from the colonizer's culture that which interests them, when and how it is convenient for them, in order to use it according to their own needs]" (da Cruz 328).

The process that da Cruz describes looks remarkably similar to processes described by Gilberto Freyre, in his notion of lusotropicalism, or Fernando Ortiz's theorizing of transculturation. Indeed, insincere recognitions of the contributions of colonized peoples to the metropolitan culture is a common rhetorical move used to justify the colonial process, as evidenced by European museums and aristocratic homes filled

[7] *Negritude* was an important predecessor to post-independence notions of national consciousness in the Portuguese colonies. The movement in the Portuguese colonies, drawn from work of intellectuals of the French colonies, sought to establish a common black identity based on idealized notions of an African past, with the intent of asserting an equally rich and valuable black history to the European (Laranjeira xii). For a complete discussion of Lusophone negritude, see Pires Laranjeira, ed. *Negritude Africana De Língua Portuguesa: Texto De Apoio, 1947-1963*. Braga: Angelus Novus, 2000.

with artifacts culled from colonial sources. This notion is more grotesquely dramatized in texts such as Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre's own *Aventura e rotina: sugestões de uma viagem à procura das constantes portuguêsas de caráter e ação* [*Adventure and routine: suggestions from a voyage in search of Portuguese constants of character and action*] (1953), a propagandistic celebration of ideal cultural "mixing" observed on his travels to each of the Portuguese colonies while funded by the *Estado Novo* dictatorship. In Freyre's and Ortiz's work, the New World colony represents a privileged locus of a new cultural product, formed from the contributions of European, African and indigenous elements.

What remains constant in these discussions, however, is the background of colonial domination and its subsequent violence, both bodily and epistemologically. As V. Y. Mudimbe points out, these approaches result in "an African literature that flatters condescending Western ears, in which Africans prove, by means of negritude and black personality rhetoric, that they are 'intelligent human beings' who once had respectable civilizations that colonialism destroyed"(Mudimbe 36). Mudimbe's objections to notions of *negritude* are founded upon the reproduction of colonial knowledge interpreted in a rhetoric of blackness as a way of "proving" their value as producers of culture. Da Cruz proposes an alternative model for the intersections of culture and decolonization, reversing the incorporation of colonized cultures, suggesting that the accommodation is at the will of the formerly colonized- to take what is convenient, use it creatively and productively, and produce a new cultural products that do not depend on the system of subordination and devaluation proposed by the colonizers. This is, in many ways, an

argument for the continued use of Portuguese as a language appropriate for African cultural expression, as da Cruz does. In this way, the notion of linguistic creolization as a reflection of post-colonial links between cultural independence and political independence—becomes central to the process of national independence.

This theorization of the "new" creolized cultural product recalls a long history of ideologies of racial mixing and its accompanying cultural products—music, visual arts, literature, etc.—that had been part of both Cuban and Angolan colonial and national imaginaries during the course of colonial occupation, and was particularly theorized during the twentieth century. As Chapter Three discusses, some of the earliest permutations of notions of "racial mixing" in the Caribbean and Portuguese Africa were notions of *blanqueamiento*/ *embranqueamento*, or "whitening," which not only set in place a class system among colonial subjects based on approximation to white skin, but carried with this value-based color system the implied assumption of linguistic, cultural and religious aspects of the colonizers, at the expense of syncretized or indigenous languages and cultural practices. The twentieth-century's *negrista*, *negritude*, nativist and creolist movements marked a shift toward a focus on and appreciation of the novelty of the "in-between" or "hybrid" cultural expression that necessarily develops in the European colonies and former colonies.

In the Lusophone world, *crioulidade* derives from the island nations of Cape Verde and São Tomé e Príncipe where racial miscegenation was widespread; as Kesha Fikes notes, "Today it refers to pan-archipelago nation building and it is thought to be politically neutral; it is used to celebrate Cape Verde's unique form of Africanity in

connection to its historic transatlantic experiences of contact and cultural hybridity" (Fikes 168). The notion of *crioulidade*, as Stephen Henighan recounts, is adopted in Angola as a partial assumption of the Portuguese colonial ideology reinforced in Freyre's influential writings, of "colonial integration" with the natives, such that cultural and racial creolization both supports notions of a sanitized colonialism, and evidences the uniqueness and creative specificity that marks and distinguishes cultural products that evidence the inextricable multiple histories of formerly colonized spaces.

In the Caribbean, notions of creolization are developed, similarly to Cape Verde, as a way of marking the distinctive histories and resulting hybridized histories, languages and cultures that are particular to these places. In Cuba particularly, Fernando Ortiz's notion of transculturation—that is, a completely new cultural product that arises as the result of contact among cultures—t, as well as the work of authors such as Lydia Cabrera, Nicolás Guillén and Alejo Carpentier, brought the contributions of Afro-Cubans into focus as an integral part, together with inheritances from Europe, of Cuban culture. This celebration of novelty as a result of creolized cultural practices are articulated by Martinicans Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant in their 1989 manifesto "Eloge de la créolité [In Praise of Creoleness]" as "the *interactional or transactional aggregate* of Caribbean, European, African, Asian and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history" (891) (italics in the original). Their notion of *créolité*, very much in line with *crioulidade*, privileges the outcome of linguistic and cultural contact as unique to and exemplary of the Caribbean and Lusophone Africa.

Mário António, of the Angolan generation of the 1960s, had specifically proposed a tripartite notion of creolization as linguistic—in localized African varieties of Portuguese, racial—in the development of mixed-race communities as cultural centers in the Portuguese colonies, and cultural—in their majority representation in the colonial cultural centers such as Luanda (Andrade 23). Mário António's use of the term references currents of thought contemporary to his writing, especially the Brazilian notions of *mestiçagem* as national identity developed by Gilberto Freyre, reflecting "mixed" cultural products and regional uses of the Portuguese language. Fernando Arenas notes that "O autor conclui que esses exemplos todos de mestiçagem cultural são prova do grau de integração social em Luanda de grupos de diversa origem [the author concludes that these examples of cultural mixing are proof of the degree of social integration in Luanda of groups of different origins]" (F. Arenas 136).

However, synthetic notions of *crioulidade* and *mestizaje/ mulataje* are problematic in the contexts of the novels studied in this dissertation, which question both the complicity of the colonial histories in idealizing racial and cultural miscegenation, as well as erasing what Glissant calls the irreducible difference among subjects that serve, for Glissant, as the basis for communication. Glissant's notion of *créolisation*, as opposed to métissage, or miscegenation, imply necessarily "unpredictable," surprising, and therefore immanently creative outcomes (*Introduction* 19), rather than the "predictable" or synthetic results of linguistic, cultural or racial "miscegenation". This notion of creolization helps to illuminate literature of disappointment by signaling both the creative impulse that these novels find by moving outside of the prescriptive politically orthodox

programs that are propogated within the Cuban and Angolan contexts. It also helps to elucidate the discomfort that these works evidence with notions of cultural synthesis, either based on idealized notions of racial harmony, or cultural fusion as the basis for a new, immanent national or international identity that culminates in the post-revolutionary era. For Glissant, creolization is a global phenomenon, rather than one that arises only in certain places (like the Caribbean) or under certain conditions (such as on the plantation). Nonetheless, the historical convergences in the conditions that give rise to certain instances or types of cultural contact, such as the contact analyzed here among Cuban and Angolan political and cultural spheres, allow this contact to be examined in its localized specificity and in its *relations* across the Atlantic.

In the Angolan context, intellectuals such as Luís Kandjimbo and Mário Pinto de Andrade anticipate this objection to the theorization of this synthetic type of creolization as a national model, noting that *crioulidade* fails to capture the experience of the majority of Angolans, and thus serves as a reminder of colonial racism rather than as a liberatory theoretical configuration. Pinto de Andrade objects to the simplistic collapsing of notions of racial mixing and symbiotic cultural mixing. He notes that in the case of Angola, as opposed to the majority *mestiço* colonies of Cape Verde and São Tomé e Príncipe, "crioulidade" is a characteristic of the upper socio-political strata, implicated in maintaining the colonial status-quo, and used to separate "assimilated" Africans from those who remain outside the social elites. Thus its resurgence as a discourse justifying trans-Atlantic alliance during and after the fight for independence must be thoroughly interrogated as a justification for a national Angolan culture.

Similarly, in Cuba, the declaration of Cuba as an "Afro-Latino" nation has as its subtext a pre-revolutionary assumption of a racialized class system. When a new political order comes to power, it brings with it the ideological solution for solving the "race problem". The unidentified author of a first-person account of a 1961 visit to Cuba (the contributors to this Palavar in a 1961 number of *Présence africaine* include Salem Okonga, Edouard Glissant, Catherine Tihanyi, Akin Owode and Paul Thibaud) provides a description of a society in which "the Negroes in Cuba quietly settled down in this new racialist-free climate without putting on any show and with no vengeful spirit… they quietly participated in the Revolution without any memories of the past" ("Cuba 1961 and Africa" 203). This observation reflects not only the official position of the Cuban leadership but also soothes the fears of nervous elites throughout the West who fear protests and uprisings in response to racial intolerance. The message reflects the claim that Agostinho Neto makes in 1973: that while solving the "race problem" is not the same as decolonization, national independence in the post-colony must bring with it a solution to institutionalized racism.

While in Cuba the *negrista* movement had begun in the 1930s with Guillén and others, and had reached international prominence in Guillén's, Carpentier's and Lydia Cabrera's works, the post-revolutionary shift in the definition of the Afro-Latino *pueblo cubano* implies revolution as a *necessary* pre-condition for this sociological move, as Carbonell articulates. The cultural products that purport to reflect the socio-historical reality after the Revolution might be called, therefore, newly transculturated products. That is, in making the "aporte negro, crucial para nuestra cultura [black contributions,

crucial for our culture]" (Morejón 226) visible in post-revolutionary literary work, the revolution serves as the mechanism for a new kind of cultural *mulataje* that serves both as "la óptica más integral y consecuente de los factores que, tras un proceso de transculturación, componen la nacionalidad [the most complete and important vision of the factors that, through a processs of transculturation, make up nationality]" (226) and as the validation for trans-Atlantic siblinghood with African peoples.

This discussion of the justifications for intersections between Angolan and Cuban discussions of post-revolutionary cultural expression gives rise to how these discussions are brought into challenges to revolutionary orthodoxy. The intersections of civil and social freedoms and artistic freedoms are one of the focuses of "heterodox" literature in Cuba; yet, the positioning of the state publishing venues and the contours of what is considered "counterrevolutionary" or is simply uncommented upon or ignored in Cuba through the final three decades of the twentieth century is anything but consistent, and reflects the changing engagement of political and cultural policy. If the vertical relationships of the anti-colonial or anti-imperial fight, as the revolution is cast after 1959, are replaced by a "war to the death among brothers," (Rojas *El estante vacío* 39) the terms of this war are not always clear, even as the stakes are high. Rojas, citing Antón Arrufat's groundbreaking play *Los siete contra Tebas* (1968), locates the turning point of the end of the "enthusiasm" and subsequent tightening of cultural policy that initiates a current of "desencanto" as the 1968 house arrest and then imprisonment of poet Heberto Padilla; Reinaldo Arenas had published *Celestino antes del alba* in 1967; both artists were awarded literary prizes by the UNEAC for works that were later perceived as

critical of the Castro regime. Chapter 2 will argue that it is precisely in evoking this early "enthusiasm" that by the late 1960s was dissipating that Alejo Carpentier's 1978 *La consagración de la primavera* locates an incomplete confidence in the future potential of the revolution to bring about the social reforms that it promises.

In Angola, the emergence of a critical literature of disappointment emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as the civil war that the MPLA leadership hoped would end a short time after independence escalated with the South African invasion, and artists and intellectuals evidence an exhaustion with the rhetoric of socialist utopia in the midst of escalating violence and the looming threat of South African invasion. Works such as Luandino Vieira's *Nós, os do Makulusu* (1974) and Manuel Rui's *Quem me dera ser onda* employ ironic renderings of empty revolutionary promises contrasted with gritty and violent realities of survival in a war zone.

The transition years of 1989-1992 that saw the collapse of the Soviet Union, the initiation of the peace process in Angola and final withdrawal of Cuban troops from that country, the resurgence of the Angolan civil war and the beginning of the economic crisis known in Cuba as the "Special Period" initiated both new phases in Angolan and Cuban letters, and paradoxically, a kind of continuity with an ironic approach to officialist positions that adapted their targets to a new kind of crisis.

OPACITY

Must a literature of disappointment be a fatalistic literature of crisis? I hope to show in this dissertation that the textual strategies that the term "disappointment" describes do not abandon many of the goals of literature of revolution in Angola after

1975 and Cuba after 1959. The novels discussed in the next three chapters engage quite seriously the epistemological implications of colonial and post-colonial histories, politics of race and creolization and national and international community formation. By insisting on literature of disappointment's simultaneous interplay with orthodox literature, however, this analysis argues that literature of disappointment models a deracinated, horizontally-oriented relationship with the aesthetic-socio-political discussions into which it inserts itself. That is to say, by engaging with the history-writing and literature-writing demands of the political programs enacted in the post-revolutionary eras, literature of disappointment reflects and yet moves outside these programs to look for a model of "relation," to use Glissant's term, that avoids the "mechanistic and systematizing view of the world" (Dash 177) that these authors find in orthodox revolutionary literature. It exemplifies what Glissant calls a "deracinated" relationship to others by objecting to the historical immanence of revolution that seeks to cast the revolutionary moment as the privileged culmination of past historical processes and socio-political uniqueness. Rather, by proposing "opacity," or an irreducible singularity of a particular moment or subject, Glissant puts forth a notion that allows these Cuban and Angolan works to enter into conversation, without synthesizing the experiences evoked through the texts into a false "sameness" or weighing them with excessive privilege, but suggests that this very "opacity" is the basis for a constant renegotionation and source of imagination that creates new and unanticipated modes of relating and artistic expressions.

Reflecting the politics of horizontal trans-Atlantic relationships organized among decolonizing peoples, literature of disappointment does not propose an alternative "top-down" vision of the historical discourses it ironizes. That is, it does not reproduce the corrective impulse of orthodox revolutionary ideology to supply an alternative and truer version of events. Rather, in fracturing the univocal nature of those narratives it references, it undermines and plays with straightforward, teleological narrations of history.

The novels discussed in this dissertation sidestep the vertical orientation of colonial relations (with Portugal in Angola and with the imperial politics of the United States in Cuba), undermining a utopian socialist project that they critique as misdirected. These novels evidence narrative voices that are suspicious of grand narratives of Western progress as well as those of socialist liberation, without either falling into post-colonial victimhood or post-modern de-politicization. However, their orientation toward diverse historical moments ask their readers both to define what their engagement with these historical moments consists of, as well as what commentary that particular engagement offers to the contemporary works they are engaging.

Irony and parody as technical devices represent this point-counterpoint interplay at the textual level, examples of which are most obvious in the novels discussed in Chapter Three, Reinaldo Arenas' *La loma del ángel*, a parody of Cirilo Villaverde's *Cecilia Valdés*, and J. E. Agualusa's *Nação crioula*, with a parody of Eça de Queirós' character Carlos Fradique Mendes. However, the other novels this dissertation discusses engage specifically with the textual practices of orthodox literature, in order to expose

their totalizing impulses, pushing out alternative modes of narration, and thus break their hegemony, pointing to experiences that are unrepresented within revolutionary orthodoxy.

Literature of disappointment interrupts official narratives, refusing them the capacity to represent a national or international collectivity univocally. So what is their position vis-à-vis the national and international communities upon which post-revolutionary rhetorics insist? The voices in novels of disappointment intersect with notions of revolutionary solidarity, revealing in their criticisms as well as in the communities created in and through their texts an investment in notions of national and trans-national alliance. In some of the works, such as Carpentier's *La consagración de la primavera* and Manuel Rui's *Memória de mar*, the revolution is not questioned as a necessary reaction to the conditions of colonial domination and imperial threat. However, these two novels do present a call for heterodoxy, demonstrating discomfort with dogmatic demands upon artists of the revolution, and questioning the role of intellectuals in the formation of post-revolutionary nationhood, and thus the position that literary creation should take toward that revolution. They counteract tendencies developed during the twentieth century in both Cuba and Angola, to see literature as inextricably linked to the historical processes in which it is produced, with a pre-determined outcome of either allegiance or opposition to revolution, as Fidel Castro's "Palabras a los intelectuales" or M. R.'s "Literatura e Ideologia" attest. Rui and Carpentier counteract this tendency by presenting political revolution through artistic revolution in its most basic terms, that is,

the creation of the truly new, unexpected and creative textual product that through its use of irony sidesteps prescriptive reflection of "revolutionary" politics.

The answer to the question of prescriptive literary models as reflective of the post-revolutionary landscape offered to in Chapter Three, is one of ironizing revolutionary orthodoxy. Arenas' *La loma del ángel* and Agualusa's *Nação crioula* object to a simplistic synthetic racial metaphor in *mestizaje*/ *mestiçagem*, ridiculing the notion that an idea founded in national whitening could yield a viable model for post-revolutionary peoples. Later novels, such as Eliseo Alberto's *Caracol Beach* and Boaventura Cardoso's *Mãe, materno mar* reexamine alternative configurations of community wrought through the consequences of wartime violence, through exile in *Caracol Beach* and through internal displacement in *Mãe, materno mar*.

These novels' interventions into their respective literary bodies suggest a model of *difference,* rather than synthesis, as a productive mode of negotiating the social landscapes of post-revolutionary Angola and Cuba. Edouard Glissant's notion of "opacity" is useful to understand how these novels relate. Glissant proposes a notion of "opacity," of mutual difference, that can result in both communication and respectful silence, rather than a transparency that forces us into comparisons based on universals to be subsumed in totalities in which each must find terms of sameness in order to relate to others. Rather, the notion of opacity, results in a "gesture of enclosure, if not appropriation" (*Poetics of Relation* 192), that permits a heterogeneity of action, thought and existence. Thus cultural creolization, processes of cultural mixing, cease to be

synthetic demands for idealized models of racially representative cultural products, and turn into productive descriptive notions of collective relation.

The ways in which cultural mixing are picked up by orthodox revolutionary discourse form part of the parameters of the novels analyzed in this dissertation. Chapter 2, which compares Alejo Carpentier's *La consagración de la primavera* [*The Rite of Spring*] to Manuel Rui's *Memória de mar* [*Memory of the Sea*], considers utopian "revolutionary time" and its promise of a racism-free utopia where colonial "leftovers" have been erased. Carpentier compares revolution in the arts, represented through Igor Stravinsky's hybrid avant-garde ballet *The Rite of Spring* to the political revolution that arrives in Cuba at the end of the novel, leaving open the questions of whether Calixto and Mirta will be able to marry, and whether the bourgeois-turned-revolutionaries Enrique and Vera will find intellectual space in Cuba after 1961. Central to Carpentier's work are the techniques of the neo-baroque, the Latin American and Caribbean revival of what Carpentier calls an art in constant movement, and which Glissant defines as a push back against the scientific fixity of rational categories, a verbal and artistic excess that disorders that which would be systematized and unified. Similarly, Rui presents the imagined utopian future of an idyllic community in which violence has been erased and Angola's African past is celebrated around a central statue of a black water-god as almost impossible to imagine amidst the decaying and neglected landscape that the Angolans inherit from the Portuguese in 1975, but questions the assumption of a uni-directional movement toward realizing such a utopia. By undermining and questioning the messianic quality of imagined revolutionary utopias, both novels address the notion of enthusiasm

in the early phases of revolution, pointing both to its unsustainability and its inability to deal with the realities of continued civil war or unresolved social hardship.

Chapter 3 draws ironic genealogies from nineteenth-century discourses of whitening in the Caribbean and in the Portuguese colonies, in Reinaldo Arenas' *La loma del ángel* [*Angel Hill*] and J. E. Agualusa's *Nação crioula* [*Creole*]. I claim that both novels subvert the post-revolutionary reversal of "whitening" discourses to criticize rhetorical political moves that reproduce racial essentializing in post-revolutionary notions of African identity. Both novels examine the impact of these discourses in contemporary cultural discussions—either through a parodic "blackening" that signal unbounded literary creativity in *La loma del ángel* or alternative creative models to naïve reproductions of colonial racial appropriation in *Nação crioula*.

The final chapter, Chapter Four, examines the inheritance of wartime violence and its biopolitical impact in Eliseo Alberto's *Caracol Beach* and Boaventura Cardoso's *Mãe, materno mar*. In each of these novels, the reverberations of the disruptions of the Angolan war result in a fracturing of the national bodies, forcing a confrontation between the utopian ideal promised in the first decades of revolution and the realities of life after war. In each of these novels, community is reformulated through the processes of displacement, suggesting alternative models for teleological narratives of nationhood. I conclude that the novels examined propose a system of relationality founded in unfixed, non-totalizing notions of trans-regional community, or works that privilege *relation* rather than sameness, a mutual recognition of both similarity and difference, that develop in the margins of revolutionary and nationalist rhetoric.

Chapter 2: Revolutionary ideology and textual practice: Alejo Carpentier's *La consagración de la primavera* and Manuel Rui's *Memória de mar*

INTRODUCTION

Alejo Carpentier's *La consagración de la primavera* and Manuel Rui's *Memória de mar* are two novels that temper the officialist idealism, optimism and confidence in the potential for socialist-based revolutions to resolve a host of social problems linked to unstable and exploitive political and social histories, with ironic portrayals of the historic conditions leading to revolution. In each case, the works have been lauded as part of genealogies of "engaged literature" that emerged as part of the new national and international literary projects after the Cuban Revolution and Angolan independence. Both Carpentier (1904-1980) and Rui (b. 1941) served as functionaries in their respective revolutionary governments, and each of the two authors has additionally explicitly commented both in interviews and in literary form upon the demands of a programmatic literary canon that reflects the new direction of Cuba's and Angola's revolutionary politics. *La consagración de la primavera* and *Memória de mar* are novels concerned with the conditions that usher in socialist revolutions as an end to colonialism and neocolonialism. Carpentier's novel, which begins with the advent of the Gerardo Machado dictatorship and ends after portraying the Playa Girón invasion in 1961, and Rui's, which imagines the first years after the final official turnover of Portuguese control to Angolan national sovereignty in 1975, cast revolution as a bloody but necessary liberating strategy, and yet one whose future promise remains ambiguous.

In the case of both of the novels, the authors focus on moments of revolutionary upheaval (the ends of wars) as the backdrop for narrating their criticisms of the historical events that have led to such processes as a means radical and violent social change. Carpentier's work follows two main protagonists, the young bourgeois Cuban Enrique, and his love interest, Russian dancer Vera. The two of them meet during the Spanish Civil War and return to Cuba just before the Cuban Revolution makes possible Vera's future production of an Afro-Cuban version of Russian composer Igor Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring*. Rui's novella centers around a series of short visits that a team of investigators makes to an isolated monastery during the final withdrawal of Portuguese troops from Angola at the end of the Angolan colonial wars, in which the whole five hundred years of Portuguese colonization are evoked and ridiculed at the moment of its dissolution. In the case of both novels, the authors' recording of historical details and moments of upheaval point to the conscious re-considerations of colonial histories that African and New World theorists have defined as central to post-colonial styles of writing in both African and American spaces.

This chapter will argue, however, that part of both novels' ironic stance toward official histories offer critical structures that foreshadow an incomplete confidence in revolutionary orthodoxy to resolve the problems of racial and class inequality, political, economic and artistic autonomy and globalization. In both of the novels, the shadow of failed revolutionary historical cycles and political projects in other parts of the globe, however, provides the ironic "edge" (Hutcheon *Irony's Edge*) that suggests critical reconsideration of positivist narrations of progress after revolution. Both authors

therefore evoke the colonial historical foundations of Africa and the Americas in order to point both to the radical rupture that socialist-driven revolution evokes, as well as to signal the potential for pitfalls from which the new social and political orders might not be able to escape.

In the work of both authors, the ironic treatment of the hegemonies of power against which revolutions are directed subvert not only historical discourses produced from within those hegemonies, but suggest that any "definitive" recounting of historical events is impossible. After Hayden White's *Metahistory* (1973), the notion that discourses of history share fiction's narrative constructions has become widely accepted; in this vein, the present reading of Carpentier's and Rui's novels will not claim to recognize in the novelistic readings of historical events any "corrective" measure. As Linda Hutcheon acknowledges, within an ironic enunciation exists the possibility to reinforce dominant discourses and sources of power ("constructive irony") as well as to undermine it ("negative irony") (*Irony's Edge* 27); the "intertextual" (*Irony's Edge* 30) game involved in the slippage between the multiplicity of significations possible for each unit of the text, however, presents the possibility that an enunciation may operate with different meanings for different readers in differing contexts. The very notion of reading a text as ironic supposes that this slippage serves to undermine the reader's confidence in any one mode of understanding the enunciation. Hutcheon notes that such an understanding of irony has been exploited by critics of postcolonial cultural production to point to the discursive spaces where multiple voices made less audible by colonialist readings of history might be heard.

This notion of irony as a method of textual challenge to colonial inheritance is a fundamental characteristic of Carpentier's and Rui's novels discussed in this chapter. The present analysis will also point to how this ironic stance undermines any other prescriptive political project as well. The heterodox position that the two novels take toward revolution is reflected in their poetics, particularly in Carpentier's neo-baroque style and in Rui's chronological games. Therefore, the two works cast suspicion upon the narrative from colonial and neocolonial influence to redemption in revolution.

Anachronism, plurivocality, deformation of language, and excessive ornamentation are stylistic techniques that each of the authors employ both to undermine a notion of historic narrative unity and to provide a metatextual commentary on the "histories" of the eras evoked that have been written before. Carpentier's neo-baroque aesthetics participates in this project as a continuation of the sixteenth-century stylistics that interrupt notions of aesthetic harmony inherited from Renaissance classicism. Gregg Lambert defends the idea that the ornamental excess found in baroque work overflows the private and privileged aristocratic spaces that had contained it to enter into public circulation among the masses. The necessary incorporation of popular cultures not only from European sources but also from the New World and African colonies into baroque works of art signals additional evidence of social spheres experiencing radical changes (Lambert 25-26). That is to say, the baroque is both a revolutionary movement in its stylistics and is employed to evoke socio-political revolution in post-colonial spaces.

Carpentier sees in baroque art "un arte en movimiento, un arte de pulsión, un arte que va de un centro hacia fuera y va rompiendo, en cierto modo, sus propios márgenes

[an art in movement, an art of impulsion, an art that moves from a center out and breaks, in a certain way, its own margins]"(Carpentier "Lo Barroco Y Lo Real Maravilloso" 107); it is an art that surges from the marginal space between the "culmination" of a civilization and the "birth of a new order". The tension-filled space between social orders is complicated in the Americas and Africa not because it reveals texts that record European styles copied and duplicated in post-colonial works, but because it makes explicit the "*mestizo*" presence of the multiple cultural influences that result from the processes of colonialism. This space suggests, in fact, that the discovery and conquest create the possibility for the baroque in Europe and the colonies, and are the conditions that, on one hand, give "order" to the narratives of colonization, and on the other, attempt the accommodation of these new experiences to the language of the known. As Lambert remarks, "It is this principle that poses an insurmountable problem to contemporary European ethics as exemplified in the writings of Derrida and Levinas: once the Other appears *as Other*, it is already destined to be the Same, that is, to be incorporated, digested, reduced to an artifact of its economy" (Lambert 132). Reflecting Glissant's wariness of systemized poetic projects, the neo-baroque in Carpentier's work incorporates stylistic excess, ornamentation, and cites a wide diversity of artistic and textual sources that create a reading experience of "constant movement" as a counter-current to this tendency to "digest" and "reduce" the revolutionary experience to a pre-determined or pre-conceived outcome. If the neo-baroque becomes, as Lois Parkinson Zamora and Monica Kaup argue, an "instrument of cultural politics," (Parkinson and Zamora 7) in Latin America, its insistence on creative excess and incorporation of

heterogeneous linguistic, geographic and cultural sources point to new creative expressions. Thus the neo-baroque, for Carpentier,

> represents and impulse toward inclusion…, an effort to bridge historical and cultural rupture, to assemble disparate cultural fragments—past and present, European and non-European… [it] construct[s] theories of cultural becoming that reach across the boundaries of fixed identities toward the formulation of yet uncertain ones. (Parkinson Zamora and Kaup 9)

In this sense, Carpentier's use of baroque textual practices to describe revolutionary processes removes from these revolutionary processes the weight of pre-determination, placing the influences he cites and thus the characters and subject positions he describes into the "relation" that Glissant identifies as the result of both the historical baroque of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and its resurgence in more recent works (*Poetics of Relation* 78-79).

Baroque stylistics destroy the possibility of a simplified, organized and harmonious economy; their movement constantly annihilates the "margins of the work of art," creating a dizzying sense of vertigo. In Carpentier's work, an artistic perspective produced from the New World, rather than from the old, resists this process of "digestion" and "incorporation," as evidenced in Enrique's observations of the clouds in Cuba's skies as he returns from Europe. While the European clouds are "domadas, algo cartesianas [tame, somewhat Cartesian]", the clouds of the New World "eran de otra raza. Antojadizas y volubles, rechazaban toda clasificación. Si eran cirros o cúmulos o nimbos, lo eran sin saberlo y sin quererlo saber [were of another race. Capricious and fickle, they

rejected all classification. If they were cirrus or cumulus or nimbus, they were such without knowing it and without wanting to know]" (*La consagración* 334)[8]. This passage demonstrates two important characteristics of Carpentier's notions of the baroque: first, that the New World is a baroque place that refuses the logics of "ordering" that discipline knowledge in the Old; second, that attempts to record this effect demand a baroque text, as evidenced by Carpentier's own vertiginous catalog of descriptions of the clouds that continues for several pages.

For both Carpentier's and Rui's novels, the confusion and "disorder" reflected in their poetic systems disrupts the possibility of ordered time. Thus, even as they narrate times of revolutionary transition with concrete historical referents, they dispute the notions that a historical genealogy can be traced from between pre- and post-revolutionary periods (or colonial and post-colonial periods). The temporal game is central to both Carpentier's and Rui's novels. In both cases, disrupting notions of linear time is key to the textual constructions that organize the novels' anti-colonial stances and reading of contemporary political situations. The stylistic collaboration within an ever-changing historic context points to these discontinuities. That is, the techniques of the baroque in *La consagración* and temporal jumps and anachronistic references in *Memória de mar* introduce an ironic reading—per Lukács—of their historical subjects. Thus the novelistic texts discussed here avoid any binary opposition between fiction and history; the novels become, instead, meta-mimetic commentaries directed at the historical projects that have organized and narrated the Cuban Revolution and the Angolan War.

[8] English translations of the passages from *La consagración de la primavera* are my own.

LA CONSAGRACIÓN DE LA PRIMAVERA

Carpentier's *La consagración de la primavera*, the author's penultimate novel published two years before his death, represents a continuation of the author's contemplation of the effects of European social upheaval on the American continent, begun with an examination of the Haitan Revolution in *El reino de este mundo* (1949) and extending to the effects of the French Revolution in the American colonies in *El siglo de las luces* (1962). Carpentier's cyclical notion of history and obsession with rewriting well-known historical events in his works from different perspectives serve to relativize and destabilize even his versions, undermining the possibility of a definitive retelling. In many ways, Carpentier's "novel of the Cuban Revolution" begins with the author's first work published after 1959, *El siglo de las luces* (1962), which anticipates the ironic disconnect between revolutionary promise and practice in a narrative focused on the echoes of the French Revolution in the late eighteenth-century Caribbean. As Roberto González Echevarría notes, "the coincidence of this 'revolutionary' phase in Carpentier's writing with the emergence of the Cuban Revolution was propitiated by Carpentier's constant appeal in his fiction to historical beginnings and apocalyptic events" (*Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home* 219). The baroque juxtaposition of multiple times and places, shifting narrative voices, and recurrent themes of iconic moments of conflict from the French to the Cuban revolutions unweights the Cuban Revolution of its messianic charge. Narrating major political events in this cyclical fashion means that Carpentier's novels cannot be read as works in the service of either absolutely pro- or anti-

revolutionary political stances. Instead, the careful irony with which the author narrates his characters' totalizing dedication to particular political ideologies allows the novels to subtly undermine one-sided readings of the conflicts central to his works.

La consagración de la primavera begins with a mishmash of historical references that evoke Cuba's troubled history during the twentieth century, including strongman governments, the threat of neocolonial influence from the United States, and racial and social inequality. Carpentier's sharp criticism of this context sets the stage for his haute-bourgeois protagonist Enrique's exodus from Cuba after falling on the wrong side of Gerardo Machado's dictatorial government. In the opening scene of the novel, Vera and Enrique reflect back on their respective pasts, which come together in the Spanish Civil War and later the Cuban Revolution after Vera escapes from Russia and Enrique flees Cuba. The circular nature of the narration both creates and undermines a causal link between the two characters' exoduses from their homes and their involvement in the grand political conflicts in Europe and back in the Americas. As Enrique recalls the events that forced him to flee from La Habana, his objections to the social climate are evoked through his portrayal of a lavish party his aunt throws to entertain "Gerardito," complete with ice-skaters imitating a popular American show over a swimming pool she has attempted to freeze into an ice rink. Through Enrique's memory, Carpentier points to the political abuses of pre-revolutionary governments that create the impetus for the Cuban Revolution. As the party guests observe the skating show, the ice collapses in the Caribbean heat, and the skaters fall absurdly into the water. This loaded scene points to a critique of Machado—a general in the Cuban war of independence from Spain—as an

abusive pawn of the United States; Enrique's aunt's failed emulation of an American-style show in the Caribbean context collapses, foreshadowing the collapse of the Republic when the Cuban Revolution triumphs. This opening sequence also sets up a critique of Cuba's political situation that draws distinct parallels with other decolonizing revolutionary moments. Like Carpentier himself, Enrique runs afoul of the Machado government and abandons Cuba for Europe where he passes through revolutionary cycles in Spain and France, returning to Havana only on the eve of the Revolution.

The imagery at the beginning of Rui's novel is perhaps even more damning. *Memória de mar* recounts the journeys of a team of investigators attempting to find out how a community of Portuguese missionaries disappears from their monastery on the eve of Angolan independence. As the three main characters—a historian, a sociologist and a Major in the anti-colonial army—arrive at the island that represents the last Portuguese colonial holdout off the coast of Luanda, the Major brings up from the shallow water "crucifixos, contas de terço, anzóis, amostras de corico, chumbadas, pedaços de amarras e outros apetrechos de fé e pescaria [crucifixes, rosaries, fishhooks, evidence of trolling, sinkers, pieces of cables, and other paraphernalia of the faith and fishing]" (14)[9]. The Major brings up the rusted evidence of the two most iconic representations of Portuguese presence in its colonies: items of the Catholic faith and evidence of the fishing industry. Found two years after the end of the colonial wars, the items in this opening scene, like the ice skating scene in *La consagración*, point to the inevitability of the decay of the colonial regime. Just as the ice rink collapses, signaling the parallel demise of the

[9] All translations of Rui's works are my own.

Machado regime, the decay of the religious and fishing items in the salt water celebrate the eventual and unavoidable end to the Portuguese colonial presence in Angola.

In each case, the two authors reference the "messianic time" that Walter Benjamin discusses in his *Theses on History*, a "now-time" which, within a work of art, captures the "utopian content of the intelligible world, though *within* the bounds of the world of experience" (Wolin 48). In the cases of each of the opening scenes of Carpentier's and Rui's novels, the "moments of tension in the present" point to "oppressed pasts" which are on the verge of being exposed, reformulated and reactive to the demands of the radical change underway in the present. However, in each case, while the revolutionary futures are presented as potential paradigms for the realization of utopian configurations, these utopias remain perpetually in the future, and the concrete changes the revolutions promise remain outside of the narration of the text. It is in the ironic tension between utopian revolutionary promises and their unconfirmed futurity that the potential for lasting revolutionary change is questioned and undermined.

In *La consagración de la primavera*, this change is symbolized in part by the problem of racial inequality: after many years in France and Spain, Enrique and Vera, an ex-dancer who has fled the Bolshevik Revolution to France, Spain and finally to Cuba, return to Havana with the dream of staging Russian composer Igor Stravinsky's revolutionary ballet *The Rite of Spring*. Vera casts the Afro-Cuban dancer Calixto in the lead role opposite her white protégé Mirta, but quickly finds that the social mores of 1950s Cuba will not accept a production with a racially "mixed" cast. At the end of the novel, as Enrique is recovering from a battle wound sustained as he fights in the Bay of

Pigs invasion, Vera confirms that, due to the change in political climate, "en noviembre ponemos *La consagración de la primavera* en la tablilla de ensayos [in November we'll put *The Rite of Spring* on the rehearsal schedule]" (*La consagración* 765). Putting on the ballet serves as the metonymic representation in the novel for resolving the inheritance of a colonial order that helps to create the dictatorships, censorship and social inequality that prevents Vera from staging the ballet. Bringing Stravinsky's hybridized ballet—an avant-garde mixture of high classical musical form with the mythology, rhythms and themes of pre-Christian Russian culture—to the stage represents, for many critics, a symbolized realization of the potential of the cultural (and racial) mixing. As Vera looks to cast her ballet, she abandons the daughters of the white upper-class in favor of the untrained young dancers of varied racial backgrounds that Calixto rounds up, because of their "innato sentido del ritmo, propio de los de su raza [the innate sense of rhythm, characteristic of those of their race]" (462). Brought up in "ambientes populares donde se bailaba en cualquier oportunidad [popular surroundings where you danced at any opportunity]," (362) the young dancers form the bridge between Stravinsky's rupture with classical forms and Cuba's "transcultured" *mestizo* subjects. Indeed, in the opening paragraphs of the novel, Vera's observations point to the metaphoric parallel between the ballet and the revolutions that form the political backdrop of the novel, "staged" in order to overturn decadent and abusive political practices and open up the "Gran Teatro del Mundo [Great Theater of the World]" (96) to a new social order.

Vera and Enrique, characters intellectually dedicated to the idea of revolution, but who do not act until the final pages of the novel, experience a slow process of

accommodating a cultural "mestizaje" represented in the arts that Calixto is able to access from his first exposure to Stravinsky's music. As a foreigner, the character of Vera is able to externalize observations that the Cuban characters take for granted; after she, a ballerina with years of professional training sees Calixto dance a "euphoria de rito triunfal [euphoria of triumphant rites]" (*La consagración* 457), she recognizes that in the few seconds during which she observes Calixto's improvised dance to *The Rite of Spring*, she completely re-conceives of the ballet not solely as a staging of a pre-modern pagan sacrifice, but as a celebration of fecundity and life removed from specific geographical and chronological markers (*La consagración* 457-58). Shocked that the other dancers can live surrounded by Afro-Cuban culture and yet object to an Afro-Cuban dancer, Vera surges ahead with her plans, while her years-long attempts to bring the performance to the stage acquires the symbolic valence of both racial equality and an epistemological shift that rewrites Cuban culture as inherently hybrid.

Carpentier's baroque stylistics serve to highlight the process toward recognizing a racially and culturally mixed Cuba in the text's seamless shifts between the traditional narration, the characters' memories of the past, and Vera's counting off the beats as she directs her dancers in their rehearsals. With this poetic technique, the repetition of Vera's counting reminds the readers that each historical event recounted—Fidel Castro's attack on the Moncada Barracks, Batista's coup—as well as discussions of artistic events and developments throughout the world, remind the reader that the historical events are but "rehearsals" leading to the "performance" that the Cuban Revolution will represent. Carpentier, in one of his many admiring articles that discuss Stravinsky's life and works

throughout the twentieth century, makes the connection between the Russian composer's work and its relevance to a *mestizo* Cuba. As early as 1927, Carpentier writes about a similarity between the inventiveness of Afro-Cuban rhythms and the Russian composer's "new form of expression" (Carpentier "Stravinsky, *Las bodas* y Papá Montero" 18), demonstrating a point of contact between the Cuban and Russian traditions that revolves around the inherent creativity of their artists.

Indeed, for the author, music, particularly the revolutionary music that Stravinsky composes, has a certain malleable quality that Vera's conception of her version of the ballet exemplifies. And yet, another valence of the post avant-garde reminds the readers that the truly revolutionary artistic moments are rarely acknowledged or accepted when they are first introduced. Recalling the riot that breaks out at the premier of *The Rite of Spring* in 1913, Carpentier warns that the artist "Luego de un triunfo inmediato, logrado mediante concesiones de estilo, halagos al gusto más generalizado, o a la explotación de fórmulas de un efecto comprobado, la obra de <<quien quiere gustar>> sucumbe al cabo de algún tiempo, ante la obra de quién respondió a las voces profundas y verdaderas de su talento creador [After an immediate triumph, achieved through stylistic concessions, flattering the most common taste, or the exploitation of formulas with a proven effect, the work of <<whoever wants to please>> succumbs after some time to the work of those who respond to the profound and true voices of their creative talent]" (Carpentier "En El 150º Aniversario De Un Escándalo"). The author's warning recalls not only the resistance of the Cuban pre-revolutionary bourgeoisie to Vera's naïve but innovative reconception of the ballet, but also slyly and ironically undermines the potential of her expectations of

synthetic resolution to Cuba's social problems to be resolved after 1959. As Enrique's Venezuelan friend warns him as the protagonist prepares to return to Havana just after the Revolution's triumph, "Cuídate de un excesivo optimismo! [be careful of excessive optimism!]" (*La consagración* 706), so Carpentier warns his readers both through undermining Vera's naïve optimism and through narrative techniques that destabilize linear narration culminating in the Cuban Revolution.

Indeed, the *consagración*, the consecration, of the new social order never actually comes to pass in the novel. What is instead narrated is the *potential* for change, on which each new revolutionary cycle is built; the failures of past revolutions evoked in Carpentier's work—most notably, the French Revolution—point to the possibility of the conclusion of the novel as an ironic one, rather than utopian and positivistic. Despite *La consagración*'s publication almost twenty years after the success of the Cuban Revolution, the author points to radical social reorganization, represented in a new era of opportunity for Calixto, as an unfulfilled future rather than a substantiated paradigm shift.

A teleological narrative of progress culminating in the Cuban Revolution is somewhat suggested through both Enrique and Vera's travels from Russia to Paris to Spain and finally to Cuba, as well as noted in their friend Gaspar's eventual arrival in Havana. Gaspar, part of the resistance movement against the fascist takeover of the French government during World War II, mockingly evokes the national mythology of the French Revolution as the paragon of the modern political state. After Gaspar's imprisonment in the French concentration camp Argelès-sur-mer, he composes a chant to keep his spirits up: "'*Allez, reculez, reculez, reculez* / *de la frontier a Argelès'*, marcando

por tres veces el estribillo de '*Libertè, Égalitè, Fraternitè*' con el muy criollo gesto consistente en alzar el dedo medio de la mano derecha, doblando el índice y el anular ['Go, retreat, retreat / from the border to Argelès', marking three times the refrain of *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* with the very criollo gesture consisting of raising the middle finger of the right hand while folding down the index and ring fingers"] (*La consagración* 387).

The vulgar gesture and mocking, ironic tone with which Gaspar evokes the French national slogan in the context of his imprisonment for fighting on the Republican side of the Spanish Civil War loads his arrival in La Habana via Caracas where "se puso en contacto con otros camaradas [he was put in contact with other comrades]" (387) with a charge of redemption. If Cuba on the eve of its revolution is the destination for persecuted socialist sympathizers from elsewhere around the globe, it also promises a kind of progress of equality that previous world revolutionary movements either failed to deliver or ones that were made impossible by those movements' defeat (i.e. in Spain) by fascist regimes.

However, the novel questions the ability to unproblematically "translate" world revolutionary spirit to the Caribbean space and time, metaphorized in the "translation" of the Stravinsky ballet to the *mestizo* Cuban culture. In fact, the ambiguity of Carpentier's treatment of the Cuban Revolution in *La consagración* has been a primary concern in the novel's critical reception. While some critics have read it as an attempt at a Socialist realist novel, Carpentier's trademark baroque exaggeration for critical effect nonetheless appears throughout the work. This style complicates the possibility of reading the novel

as a "straightforward" reading of the Cuban Revolution as the ultimate redemptive, successful culmination of revolutionary cycles begun in Russia, Mexico, Spain and Venezuela. If the baroque is the stylist mark of epistemic rupture, which both Carpentier and Lambert argue, *La consagración* uses this style to capture the extensive historical narrative of the major political events thorough which his characters pass on their way to revolutionary Cuba. However, if the baroque also represents the impossibility of causal, teleological constructions of past to present/ future along with epistemological rupture, it is fitting that the novel ends just as the Cuban Revolution begins. Thus Carpentier, in an epistemological wink to his readers, leaves them before the "revolutionary promise" is demonstrably fulfilled. That is, he leaves the readers "hanging," expecting the promise of a new socialist utopia, but unable to confirm its effectiveness in ushering in substantial social improvements.

Recording this "split" between promise and practice is in fact the function that evoking revolution serves in *La consagración de la primavera*. Revolution serves, in some sense, as a literary trope that arrests time and history, or at least makes visible the moment of suspension in which the entire possibility of historical redemption is possible, but may never come to pass. This tension is recorded in the novel through a vacillation between an excess of historical detail and moments in which the characters experience a kind of timelessness, as the historical specifics fade into the background. In each case, however, the cycle of revolution and the metonymized representation of the Stravinsky ballet reappear. If at one moment, the growing political unrest in 1950s Cuba is evidenced by the appearance of dozens of tortured cadavers on the side of the road,

executed by Batista's orders (*La consagración* 552), at another, the characters interpret it as simply another permutation of a worldwide and history-long explosion of injustice—as Gaspar puts it, "siempre es el mismo. Alemán, italiano, franquista *allá*, yanqui aquí: estacas del mismo palo. Fascismo, colonialismo, *tercera solución*, monopolios, capitalismo, latifundistas, burgueses: el mismo perro con distintos collares [it's always the same. German, Italian, Francoist *there*, Yankee here: cut from the same cloth. Fascism, colonialism, *third solution*, capitalism, owners of latifundios, bourgeois: the same dog with different collars]" (*La consagración* 390). While the potential for redemption from these political scourges is, at one moment, evoked in the specific "events of the 26th of July,"[10] (*La consagración* 552) at another it is simply a new iteration of the same "palabra 'Revolución' [que] me percutía en los oídos a todas horas, en tónica de acento andino, venezolano, guaraní, quechua o limeño, papiamentoso o *créole* [word 'Revolution' [that] beat in my ears all the time, to the tune of Andean, Venezuelan, Guaraní, Quechua or Lima, Papiamento or Creole accents]" (*La consagración* 156). The Cuban Revolution at the end of the novel becomes simply another repetition of the revolutionary historical cycle that has passed through each of the spaces that Enrique and Vera visit.

Carpentier's and Vera's explicit comparison's to the ballet stage and the stage of historical events creates a tension between grand historical cycles and local and national specifics is addressed metaphorically through Vera's approach to music and dance. If, for

[10] The 26th of July is celebrated as the anniversary of Fidel Castro's attack on the Moncada barracks in 1953, initiating the guerilla war against Batista.

her, the *notion* of folkloric music and dance serve as "factor de entendimiento entre los pueblos [a factor of understanding among peoples]" (*La consagración* 392), this understanding is always achieved through the manipulation of the medium through which the culture is presented to an audience. That is, this folkloric cultural expression is produced by its context; in order to "produce" it in a theater, such that it can be "disseminated" among an audience, "hay que repintarla, encuadrarla, ponerla en condiciones de que le echen los focos encima. Entonces, deja de ser *fo-lore* [you have to repaint it, frame it, put it in conditions so that the spotlights elevate it. Then, it stops being folklore]" (*La consagración* 392). For critic Dominic Moran, this manipulation is precisely what makes Vera's insistence on the redemptive power of "natural" Afro-Cuban expression unconvincing- the fact that it must be translated and disciplined by European discourses—in this case, Vera's classical ballet training—in order to achieve its potential.

The novel nevertheless undermines the suggestion that a post-vanguard Russian ballet, revolutionary in its artistic form, its combination of premodern and modern rhythms, and its undermining of classical rules, will be mapped upon the Cuban socio-artistic space as an unproblematic model for cultural *mestizaje*. The text suggests that Vera's naïve faith in a synthetic model for artistic production as correcting the social ills of the pre-revolutionary era fails to consider the complications inherent in "importing" a socio-political form to a new space and time. Carpentier's appreciation of the revolutionary form of the music cannot be underestimated, and yet the author looks somewhat suspiciously upon the possibility of reproducing the same results in a new

context. The topic of a model cultural translation, in fact, had been developed in Carpentier's first novel published after the success of the Cuban Revolution, *El siglo de las luces* [*Explosion in a Cathedral*] in 1962. Set in Cuba and the French Caribbean during the end of the eighteenth century, the main character of *El siglo*, Esteban, is caught between the idealistic promise of the changes to be brought about by the French Revolution and the violent effects of despotic leadership in the French colonies after slavery is repealed and reinstated.

El siglo de las luces provides an essential counterpoint to one of the central problems of *La consagración de la primavera*: what is at risk in importing and reproducing a political or an artistic model for revolution to the Caribbean space? The context of Cuba's "quinquenio gris" of 1971-1976, which ends just before the 1978 publication date of *La consagración* undermines the suggestion that Vera's ingenuous confidence in the fact that her ballet production will be able to effectively translate the reality of the Cuban social landscape using the vehicle of a post-vanguard Russian composition. In Cuban intellectual Ambrosio Fornet's 2007 speech at Havana's *Casa de las Américas*, he suggests that this five-year period of the most strident official regulation of artistic production in the model of socialist realism was accompanied by a political subtext: "El realismo socialista no era 'intrínsecamente perverso'; lo intrínsecamente perverso fue la *imposición* de esa fórmula en la URSS, donde lo que pudo haber sido una escuela, una corriente literaria y artística más, se convirtió de pronto en doctrina *oficial*, de obligatorio cumplimiento. [Socialist realism was not 'intrinsically perverse'; what was intrinsically perverse was the *imposition* of this formula in the USSR, where what could

have been a school, even a literary and artistic tendency, was suddenly converted into *official* doctrine, with obligatory compliance].” (Fornet "El Quinquenio Gris: Revisitando El Término" n/p). Clearly referencing the Cuban endorsement of social realism as the definitive aesthetic form of the Revolution in the 1970s, *La consagración de la primavera* cites the social realist form, even as it undermines this form with baroque passages and temporal games. Thus without rejecting such a form, Carpentier’s novel criticizes forced orthodoxy to particular aesthetic projects. The parallel between the imposition of an artistic model and the imposition of a political model—such as the terror used by *El siglo de las luces*’ despot Víctor Hughes to enforce the new order of the French Revolution—develops through the conversation between Carpentier’s two novels.

Just as the pivot point of Vera’s ballet revolves around incorporating Afro-Cuban dancers into a nationally staged production, one of the central conflicts of *El siglo de las luces* concerns how to incorporate freed slaves into a new democratic society. Víctor Hughes, the Enlightened Freemason turned dictatorial governor of the French colony of Guadaloupe initially brings the doctrine of universal citizenship to the Caribbean, freeing the slaves, only to reinstate slavery as a measure to protect the economic wellbeing of those in power. As Louis Sala-Molins points out, not only were the major Enlightenment thinkers unable to conceive of the extension of legal personhood to slaves, but they could not either conceive of extending personal freedoms, and therefore national citizenship, to Africans or African-descended peoples (Sala-Molins 12). Sala-Molins’ argument rests upon a spatial division, as well as an ontological one, between the metropolises and the colonies such that “there was no question of considering the black population, freed or

enslaved, of the Caribbean and the other colonies… as constituting peoples, let alone nations" as they were; they had to wait "for the creation of the legal and procreative conditions for the gradual whitening, and the development of the appropriate context for philosophical receptiveness to white virtue… Such then, concerning blacks, is the truth of the universal philanthropy of the Enlightenment" (12). Paul Miller sums up the structural inheritance of this problematic of the promise of the Enlightenment in a series of epistemological "traps" that represent, for some modern Caribbean writers, "a series of binary relationships such as center/periphery, master/slave, leaders/masses" (Miller 3) from which these writers are unable to escape. Carpentier's textual style helps to extract his readings of history from these binary relationships.

The contortion of the philosophical notions of universal rights that the spaces of the colonies demanded in order to maintain the economic relationship between the colonies and the European metropolises is taken up in *El siglo*, in which Esteban is instructed in the "new ideas" of Freemasonry by his friend and mentor Víctor Hughes. Esteban escapes the oppressive drudgery of assuming the family merchant business by travelling to France where he becomes a Freemason during the onset of the French Revolution, and sails back to Guadaloupe where Víctor Hughes is to become governor. As he is in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, literally suspended between the two spaces of the Caribbean and Europe, he reflects that "A medida que las naves se alejaban del continente, la Revolución, dejada atrás, se simplificaba en las mentes… se deslastraba de contradicciones [As the ships left the Continent astern, the Revolution began to simplify itself in people's minds; …the Event was… pared of contradictions]" (Carpentier *El*

Siglo 192; *Explosion* 117)[11]. He and the other Freemasons look forward to a future "menos irreligioso… menos antimasónico… más igualitario, más comunitario [less religious, less antimasonic… more equalitarian, more communalistic]" (*El Siglo* 192; *Explosion* 118), reflecting not only the hopes for positive effects of the French Revolution in the colonies, but also citing the expectations of participants in each of the revolutionary cycles through which the characters pass in *La consagración*.

However, it is only when distanced from the reality of the French Revolution on the European continent and from the colonies in the Caribbean that the direction of the future of the French Revolution in the Caribbean is so clear. As Víctor Hughes observes in the beginning of the novel, the Caribbean distorts and confuses what seems intelligible and clear in Europe; it presents irrealities and fantastic elements that cannot be assimilated into the gaze of outsiders:

> Las Antillas constituían un archipiélago maravilloso, donde se encontraban las cosas más raras: áncoras enormes abandonadas en playas solitarias; casas atadas a la roca por cadenas de hierro, para que los ciclones no las arrastraran hasta el mar; … galeones hundidos, árboles petrificados, peces inimaginables. (*El Siglo* 109)
>
> [As for the Antilles… it was a marvelous archipelago, where one came across the strangest things: enormous anchors abandoned on lonely beaches; houses fixed to the rocks with iron chains, so that the cyclones would not sweep them out to sea;

[11] The separate page numbers and titles for the Spanish *El siglo de las luces* and its translation to English with the title *Explosion in a Cathedral* refer to their respective editions.

…sunken galleons, petrified trees, unimaginable fish]. (*Explosion* 33)

These fantastic elements of the landscape serve both as metonymic representations of the equally fantastic—that is, inassimilable—confrontations between the Caribbean social realities that Esteban and Víctor Hughes are about to encounter, and the Enlightenment ideal of universal citizenship and freedom from enslavement that the colonial governors fail to translate from the European continent to the Antilles.

This mishmash of artifacts representing the conviviality of histories and epochs in the space of the Caribbean represent the baroque stylistic that Carpentier defines as arising naturally from the American landscape. If the artifacts of colonial presence are "unassimilable" to ordered description, like the clouds that Enrique observes in *La consagración*, the tools of Revolution might suffer the same untranslatability. As the guillotine's blade enforces violence against the colonial citizens for any infraction against the French governors, the novel suggests that violent social upheaval rarely fulfills the expectations of its participants. In fact, it is in the descriptions of the implementation of the Revolution that the ironic commentary of the novel is evident. As Esteban observes the operations of the guillotine enforcing the "Jacobin moral code," in a central plaza of Guadaloupe, its very presence is clearly out of place:

> Lejos de su ambiente mayor, lejos de la plaza salpicada por la sangre de un monarca, donde había actuado en Tragedia Trascendental, aquella máquina llovida—ni siquiera terrible, sino fea; ni siquiera fatídica, sino triste y viscosa—cobraba, al actuar, el lamentable aspecto de los teatros donde unos cómicos de la legua, en funciones provincianas, tratan de remedar el estilo de los grandes

actores de la capital (*El Siglo* 184).

> [Far from its more important setting, far from the square that had been spattered with a monarch's blood, where it had taken part in a transcendent tragedy, this rain-soaked machine—which was not terrible, but ugly; not ominous, but damp and gloomy—wore, when in use, the pitiful look of one of those provincial theatres where a second-rate company is trying to imitate the grand style of the actors of the capital]. (*Explosion* 109)

What Carpentier is signaling in this passage is both the importance of context in the notion of revolution—that is, the local and specific conditions that give rise to its eruption and its contours—as well as the difficulty if not impossibility of its translation between spaces and times. Reflecting the theatrical metaphor repeated in *La consagración* for the "performance" of the revolution's mechanisms in the colonies, *El siglo de las luces* suggests that the transition between social orders will both reflect its "rehearsals" elsewhere and fail to live up to its promises. The comparison of the government officials in charge of executions to small-time actors mimicking the great performances that take place at a distance suggest that the presence of the guillotine in Guadaloupe reflects the colonial project in itself, and is equally out-of-place in the Caribbean context.

As Luisa Campuzano notes, the issue of colonial power differential and the uniqueness of the Caribbean environment takes the form of concerns about racial equality in *La consagración de la primavera* and slavery and black citizenship in *El siglo de las*

luces (Campuzano 75-76). By positing the ideals of the French Revolution both as incompatible with slavery and at the same time as incompatible with black citizenship, *El siglo de las luces* points to the paradox of a *national* revolution addressing issues salient to a global economic system. In an ironic turn, after Esteban finds out that Víctor Hughes has authorized French slave traders to sell their human wares at Dutch slaving ports rather than free the slaves in accordance with the decree of the Abolition of Slavery, a sailor notes that a personal friend of Juan Jacobo owns a slaving ship named *The Social Contract*. The situation points to a situation in which the French Revolution and the notions of progress of the Enlightenment *create* the racial categories of degeneracy assigned to African-descended peoples in the colonial territories.

An example of this notion, which becomes salient in *La consagración de la primavera* in the novel's discussion of space for Calixto as a performer on a national stage, takes place towards the end of *El siglo de las luces* when the decree abolishing slavery in the French Caribbean colonies is repealed. The signals of this failure of Enlightenment notions of freedom to adapt to the colonies are clear: at each step, rebellion against the arrival of the revolutionary changes takes place. In Guadaloupe, "numerosos negros… se negaban a trabajar en el cultivo de fincas expropiadas, alegando que eran hombres libres [numerous negroes… were refusing to work on fincas, declaring that they were free men]" (*El Siglo* 227; *Explosion* 152); in Cayene "un árbol de la libertad, plantado frente al feo y desconchado edificio que servía de Casa de Gobierno, había secado por falta de riego [a Tree of Liberty, planted opposite the ugly, peeling building that served as Government House, had withered for want of irrigation]" (*El Siglo*

283; *Explosion* 212); looking for refuge in Sinnemary, "que tenía algo de irreal y de fantástico [with something unreal and fantastic about it]" (*El Siglo* 295; *Explosion* 225) Esteban notices "un Estado Antiguo asolado por la peste [a sort of Ancient State… ravaged by pestilence]" (*El Siglo* 295; *Explosion* 224). These signals of pending failure culminate in the debilitating disease that Víctor Hughes and his slave hunters suffer after their failed attempts to bring back the slave workforce when slavery is reestablished and the black population flees.

The evocation of tyrannical action and rebellion of the colonized in *El siglo* points to the impossibility of a linear notion of progress in the Caribbean. In this sense, *La consagración de la primavera* falls in line with Carpentier's earlier works, in which cycles of historical time form a spiral that creates a discernable but changing code, like the motion of the hurricane that sets the events of *El siglo* in motion. Such is the representation of the major world revolutions evoked in *La consagración*. However, this format seems to be at odds with messianic character that the characters in the later novel assigns to the Cuban Revolution, leaving the reader with the question of whether the novel presents the Cuban case as one more revolutionary cycle that is distorted by changing local conditions, or the culmination of a series of failed attempts that finally sees success and redemption in 1959.

By extension, if "understanding" and redemption are to be found in the popular cultures that Afro-Cuban music, dance and ritual represent (a theme throughout

Carpentier's work[12]) for Vera, does it manage to hold on to its redemptive qualities once it is "repackaged" and "reframed" for larger distribution? If this popular culture is a metaphor for the Revolution that reappears as the expression of the masses, parallel to folkloric culture, does it lose its redemptive potential once it is interpreted, harnessed and organized into a concrete political structure? The answer suggested by Víctor Hughes in *El siglo* seems to be that this is precisely where revolution is most likely to fail. The same underlying ironic posture toward the ends of revolution can be read in *La consagración* as well.

At the end of *La consagración*, in which the early years of the Cuban Revolution are narrated, the ideological transition from Batista's to Castro's governments is imbued with the same uncertain irony that Vera's show consisting of Stravinsky's *Rites of Spring* together with several pieces inspired in popular Cuban music displays. Enrique's friend José Antonio, who before the revolution was helping to finance Vera's *espectáculo*, earnestly talks to Enrique of "Our Revolution" to which he has sacrificed everything: "él, que sólo había perdido su negocio porque era un negocio deleznable, reñido con las nuevas realidades que vivíamos [he, who had only lost his business because it was a crumbling enterprise inconsistent with the new reality we were living]" (*La consagración* 733). The introduction of the ex-bourgeois character who changes his tune the moment he sees that his advantage is lost suggests one ironic outcome of the post-Revolutionary era. Enrique and Vera both separately contemplate their experiences in the Cuban countryside

[12] See, for example, Birkenmaier, Anke. *Alejo Carpentier y la cultura del surrealismo en América Latina.* Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2006.

and the "redemptive" qualities of the *campesinos* and *negros* whom they see as most benefitting from the Revolution. And yet, even as Enrique reconceives his profession of an architect as a "metaphoric" representation of designing the new *patria*, and Vera is finally able to place her show on the bill after the Revolution, the characters never bring their achievements to pass within the pages of the text. If, returning to Lukács, Lambert and Linda Hutcheon's notion of historiographical meta-fiction, the historical novel is an ironic commentary on the process of writing history, the history that Carpentier writes in the pages of *La consagración de la primavera* only serves to undermine the projected future that the novel points to as its pages end.

Part of what Carpentier is playing with in this novel are the notions of echo, translation and imitation. The "bubbling up" of anachronistic moments—the echoes of other times, places and languages in the production of the ballet together with the characters' experiences as well as genres, arts and discourses; dance and music as well as ritual and politics—creates a text that turns the notions of progress and orthodoxy on their heads. Carpentier's notions of revolution as developed in *La consagración de la primavera* are not limited to the political; or rather, the political is implicated in the arts. Thus the hanging questions at the end of *La consagración*—whether Vera will, indeed, put on the performance; and second, whether these performances will reflect a radical social shift that reacts against racism and discrimination—remain unanswered. These questions point to Carpentier's configuration of revolution as cycle and repetition, even as it introduces the new; this notion that closely reflects the way that history itself is treated in Carpentier's works as a process of irreverent transculturation. However, what is

also being debated in *La consagración de la primavera* is whether there will be a place for Vera and Enrique at all in post-revolutionary Cuba.

Part of the irony at the end of the novel suggests that the metaphoric "sacrifice" represented in the ballet through the young girl who dances to her death to assure fertility may point to Vera and Enrique, and by extension, to Carpentier himself. Fornet points to the early years of the Revolution during which the Editorial Nacional de Cuba, under Carpentier's directorship, translated and distributed a broad range of "universal" literature. Thus the tightening of interpretations of "orthodox" aesthetic projects in the early 1970s reflecting Che Guevara's theory of the *Hombre Nuevo* as a counterpoint to the individual artist who creates only for himself, comes as a surprise to the intellectual community. Fornet's declaration that the government's fear that aesthetic "discrepancies" were hiding political discrepancies provides a telling subtext for the end of Carpentier's novel. Carpentier's notion of revolution depends on this proliferation of discordant but repetitious aesthetic programs. This notion is reflected not only in the baroque style of the text, but in the cyclical historical structure of the plot, reflecting the double meaning of "revolution" as social upheaval as well as a cyclical path that returns to its origins. If Carpentier conceives of an intimate link between artistic and political revolution, it is a notion of revolution that disputes the official orthodoxy that was being enforced during the 1970s in Cuba

MEMÓRIA DE MAR

In a similar fashion to Carpentier's mixture of different spaces and times, Manuel Rui's *Memória de mar* narrates Angola's transition Portuguese colony to independent

state through a vacillation of concrete historical markers and anachronistic episodes and characters from the whole five hundred year history of Portugal's presence in Angola. While Carpentier's text points to popular culture and popular revolt as an unfulfilled solution to cycles of oppression and inequality, Rui's novel celebrates the opportunity to build a new independent nation, free from colonial violence, but ends his narrative before this national utopia is brought into existence. In both texts, the euphoric tone with which socialist revolution is presented as a solution is tempered both by its necessary and difficult translation to the local problems and tensions of neo-colonial Cuba and colonial Angola, as well as by its unconfirmed realization by the end of the novels.

Memória de mar [*Memory of the sea*] recounts an excursion that a team of three investigators allied to the socialist Movimento Popular para a Libertação de Angola [Popular Movement for Angolan Liberation; MPLA] take to a small island off the coast of the Angolan capital of Luanda to investigate who remains in the final moments before the Portuguese officially recognize Angolan national sovereignty in 1975. Like Carpentier's characters who perambulate through various spaces, Rui's characters are wanders; however, of a different type. Rui's characters, in their search to recreate the history of the island, travel through time to "return to before" in order to recreate the historical events that culminate on the eve of Angolan independence from five hundred years of Portuguese rule. Like in the Cuban context, literature was an explicit "arm" of the revolutionary socialist movement in Angola, exemplified and personified in Angola's first poet-president, Agostinho Neto. Thus, as critic Phyllis Peres points out, "National liberation in Angola was indeed an act of culture, a reclaiming of that terrain reserved for

the colonizing subject that moved the marginalized perspective of the colonized to the center of a new nation-space" (Peres 15). Peres continues, however, that the protracted struggle and immediately evident difficulties that arise from the nation-building process quickly close down the phase of utopian socialist literature that might fall into the trap of mimicking colonial notions of national unity; on the contrary, Peres claims that Angolan writers record the tensions inherent in the precarious "liminal space" that do not assimilate the "imagined communities" per Benedict Anderson that governed the narration of national formation in the European context.

Indeed, many questions about the interpretation of Angola's colonial history and the subsequent direction of its national future that Rui puts forward in his novel continue to reappear in his and later generations' literary work. Thus while critics often identify a split between the "revolutionary" period of politically engaged literature and a later period of disillusionment in line with literature of crisis across Sub-Saharan Africa, the current reading of Rui's novel suggests that engagement with socialist ideology, national imaginary and colonial inheritance remain on the forefront of Rui's work from *Memória de mar*, and thus provide a certain of theoretical continuity that links this novel to the author's later work. Peres notes the predominance of an ironic mode in Rui's work, directed both at the colonial machine and at the later corruption and socio-political failures that the continued state of conflict in Angola belies. While *Memória de mar* is certainly a novel of transition between the anti-colonial and post-independence moments, it introduces an ironic tension between the current realities and the promised post-independence future.

The dizzying effect of Carpentier's baroque prose finds a parallel effect in the Rui's chronological jumps and anachronisms, in which the narrator moves quickly through times and places in short, narrative chapters with no explanation to signal where the reader might land next. The disorienting effect, as Peres comments, serves the function of counteracting narratives of discovery and colonization. The characters who represent the Portuguese colonizing mission, both religious and military figures, are exaggerated, ridiculed, parodied and ironized as the reader pieces together an alternative logic that brings a close to the narrative in Luanda in 1978.

The novel opens with the small group on the water en route to the island, unsure of what they will find there. From the first chapter, however, the author points to an ambivalence that opens the possibility of his ironic evocation of late-1970s Angola as a space where anything—including the continued neocolonial presence of the former colonizers—might disrupt precarious independence. As the three investigators approach the island, the first-person narrator records his unease: "Tomámos mesmo precaução a sério pois que finado o tempo colonial atrasavam ao continente quaisquer notícias da ilha e seus habitantes. E quem podia garantir a nossa segurança ali? [We took precautions seriously, since from the end of colonial times any news of the island and its inhabitants had been delayed. And who could guarantee our safety there?]" (Rui *Memória De Mar* 13).

The narration of the initial investigations of the island invert the dominant modes of discourses of discovery, updated for the twentieth century. The three investigators' reactions to a mango grove that had seen a recent harvest parody colonial notions of

idealization of the "unfallen world," military aggression, and ethnographic curiosity in the team's comments as the narrator picks up a ripe mango. He is prevented from taking a bite of the "doce e terebentinosa [sweet and syrupy]" flesh (*Memória De Mar* 18) by the others, who issue warnings. The major suggests that the island's inhabitants could be enemies who poisoned the fruit or the water, while the sociologist warns that the mango could be part of a religious ceremony, or that eating it could violate indigenous property rights resulting in the death penalty (*Memória De Mar* 19). The exaggerated concerns of the group for the dangers inherent in exploring an unknown and incomprehensible land mimic and ridicule discourses of the discovery and conquest. The exaggerated care that the group takes toward approaching the community of Portuguese priests recasts the monastic community as unknown, peripheral to the "history" taking place on the continent, and possibly dangerous. The priests have become the "natives" of the stories of discovery and conquest. This exchange points to the position for literature that Rui's novel posits in the post-independence era: by ironically destabilizing the narratives that had been told *about* Angola through the colonial period, the novel suggests that post-independence/ revolutionary literature must avoid the totalizing national narrative traps of the colonial projects.

Glissant's notion of "arrow-like nomadism" defines Discovery and Conquest as the result of a process of "rooting," both physically and ideologically. If discovery and conquest "achieve a final, almost mystical perfection in the Voyage," (Glissant 16-17) it is the Voyage for Glissant that represents History as a totalizing force. Indeed, the trope of the sea voyage is central to the Portuguese national imaginary that Rui carefully

dismantles. The religious holdout community on a precarious island off the coast of Angola's capital provides a counter-discursive creation of the *end* of Portuguese colonial hegemony, occupying a peripheral, almost-forgotten space. As an alternative, it disrupts the centuries-long imperialist refrain of certainty of purpose and epitomized in Renaissance poet Luis de Camões' 1572 epic poem *Os Lusíadas*, which recounts the

> memórias gloriosas
> Daqueles Reis, que foram dilatando
> A Fé, o Império, e as terras viciosas
> De África e de Ásia andaram devastando
>
> [Kings likewise of glorious memory
> Who magnified Christ and Empire,
> Bringing ruin on the degenerate
> Lands of Africa and Asia]. (Camões Book 1 2.1-4)

In contrast to the ways in which they imagine themselves as the inheritors of Camões' protagonists, the priests whom the investigators encounter are cut off from the course of history taking place on the continent.

In a ludic twist, the novel introduces the disorienting sense of anachronism that accompanies the Portuguese presence in Angola at the end of the empire through the characters' literal time travel. Unable to find the community that has harvested the mangoes, the group of investigators travels back to two years before the "quinhentos," or the 1975 date marking the end of five hundred years of Portuguese colonial presence in

Angola, in order to determine how the community of priests disappears. Later in the novel they appear in the future, when the "quinhentos" seems already five hundred years in the past; they run across a boat full of ex-slaves from the era of the slave trade, and a Portuguese Viceroy of the Indies appears with his soldiers wielding their swords aboard a 1970s Portuguese submarine waiting for the declaration of victory over the MPLA that never comes before the submarine sinks off the coast of Luanda. Deleuze and Guattari's notion of deterritorialization helps explain the context of Rui's novel not through movement in space, but rather through movement in time. The chronological jumps, uncontextualized in the text, dismantle the sovereignty of linearly narrated history, and charges the moment of Angolan independence with the capacity to "unweight" the colonial history that has been told about it for the past five hundred years.

The sense of anachronism that surrounds the community of priests is exaggerated by their seeming ignorance of the importance of the events unfolding on the continent. Once the investigators travel back to two years before the quinhentos, they come across a well-ordered and idyllic religious community that receives them peacefully. The disconnect between the priests' understanding of their "peaceful" place in the world and the anti-colonial war raging on the continent creates an ironic reading of the continued defense of the configurations of an early-modern Portuguese empire in the final decades of the twentieth century. An exchange between the sociologist and a priest demonstrates the mutual lack of comprehension, as the sociologist fails to understand the terms under which the priests consider themselves to be different from their Angolan servants:

—Nós quem?...

–Nós os religiosos de origem, os que chegámos aqui para evangelizar.

--Não compreendo. Sou sociólogo e a questão interessa-me.

--Sim. Queria dizer, nós os que não descendemos do gentio, viemos de longe, deixámos pátria e família com a sagrada missão de cristianizar esta terra.

--Ainda não entendo mas surge-me outra questão. Pelo que ouvi, isto não é a vossa pátria.

--Bem. Esta terra pertence à nossa pátria, faz parte integrante. Só que eu me estava a referir à pátria mãe. De origem, da nossa origem. (*Memória De Mar* 23-24)

[--We who?

--We the original monks, who arrived here to evangelize.

--I don't understand. I'm a sociologist and the matter interests me.

--Yes. That is to say, we who did not descend from the heathens, we came from far away, we left our families and our country behind with the sacred mission of Christianizing this land.

--I still don't understand but another question occurs to me. From what I understand, this is not your country.

--Indeed. This land belongs to our country, it's an integral part. I was just referring to the motherland. Originally, to our origin.]

The sense of estrangement, deterritorialization and anachronism that the conversation evokes serves to "unhinge" the period of Angolan independence from larger

European colonial narratives, the narratives of Portuguese empire, and significantly, the linear narrative of incipient Angolan nationalism. The exchange quoted above slyly creates a structural irony of the colonial perspective in pointing to the lack of comprehension between the monk and the sociologist. As the monk repeats the Portuguese colonial party-line, that the colonies represent an "integral part" of the motherland, his words also point to the essential paradox of the Portuguese Estado-Novo corporatism: that there is an irreconcilable ontological split between the status of the colonialists and the "heathens," and thus the notion of the colonies forming an "integral part" of the metropolis is literally unthinkable for the sociologist.

The fact that the Portuguese-speaking audience would be extremely familiar with this kind of rhetoric, the sociologist's claims to "not understand," and the narrator's refusal to name the "place of origin" as Portugal, undermines and destabilizes the relevance of the narrative of colony to the configuration of the post-quinhentos Angola. In this way, the novel contests Fanon's and Mbembe's notions of post-colonial national configurations predicated on reproducing the colonial model. That is, it suggests that there might be an alternative model for post-colonial communities that does not place the nation-state as the default term that replaces "colony" in 1975. References to revolutionary ideology and internationalist alliance are subtly evoked throughout the novel, as well as African-derived religious and cultural epistemologies that resurge between the cracks of a colonial system that is revealed to have a only a peripheral and tenuous presence in its largest overseas "province". Thus the overarching narrative of the group of three investigators' journey is less the creation of a post-colonial narrative as a

response to a colonial history, but rather the notion of the inevitable disappearance of an antiquated, quaint and irrelevant colonial presence that is incapable of comprehending or communicating with the social reality of late-twentieth century revolutionary independence.

Two other monumental historical episodes are similarly made strange as the group of investigators continues to try to unravel the story of the disappearance of the community of monks on the "Ilha dos padres": the Discovery and Conquest, and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. While these are certainly iconic moments in the narration of the Iberian colonial projects and most of Sub-Saharan Africa, Rui once again evokes their traces without naming their specific historical circumstances. In so doing, he simultaneously reaffirms their significance, while displacing their colonial organization from a linear narrative. The group of investigators, frustrated in their efforts to gain intelligible answers from the priests two years before the quinhentos, return to two years afterward. Time travel is consistently linked to travel over the sea, and it is indeed in the water that historical moments converge, "historicity" and "timeliness" collapse, and notions of coloniality and post-coloniality are re-drawn. In the passage from the island to the mainland, the investigators see a boat whose "remos passavam na pele do mar sincronizadamente sob o ritmo de um cântico espiritual. –Quem diria! Isto ainda se canta na América e no Brasil--exclamou o historiador [oars passed through the skin of the sea in synchronization with the rhythm of a spiritual. –Who would have thought! That's still sung in America and Brazil—exclaimed the historian]" (Rui *Memória De Mar* 64).

The genealogy drawn by the rowers, native African ex-servants/ slaves of the monks on the island, evokes the collective history of the Angolan populations in order to narrate their suspended presence at the end of the colonial period, between the island and the continent. The spiritual they sing, still reproduced in the African-descended communities of Brazil and the United States, is sung to the rhythm of the symbolic passage through the epochs that lead them to the end of the five hundred years. Their history, however, is not presented as ending at this moment, but rather suspended to create a space for the act of narration, before the rowers return to their epic journey. As they tell the investigators,

> Antes de D. Junqueira ter chegado à ilha, andaram por mil caminhos, conheceram o outro lado do mar, haviam carregado milhares de tipóias, trabalhado para milhares de senhores em milhares de plantações, engenhos e guerras. Foi então que apareceu D. Junqueira, o primeiro religioso a ocupar a ilha. E os homens foram enviados para lá (Rui *Memória De Mar* 65)
>
> [Before Dom Junqueira had arrived on the island, they walked along a thousand roads, they knew the other side of the sea, they had carried thousands of slings, worked for thousands of masters for thousands of plantations, sugar mills and wars. It was then that Dom Junqueira appeared, the first monk to occupy the island. And the men were sent there.]

The strategy of evoking African oral storytelling in order to introduce the collective narration of specific events serves to undermine the particularity of the

occurrences that lead this group of servants to abandon the island—the demise of the monks by the angry water-goddess Quianda[13]—in the context of their collective history at the hands of the Portuguese colonial enterprise. However, as in the exchange between the Father Superior and the sociologist, in the story that the *griot* recounts, Portuguese protagonism in the colonial project is reduced, and almost disappears from the narration. It is the servants who serve as the subjects of the action, who travel across the seas, who gain the collective knowledge of the other side of the globe, and who conduct their historical narrative, symbolized in their travels in the sea.

The novel thus inscribes itself in the debates surrounding the terms for the formation of a national culture and for Angola's participation in an international circulation of world socialist-aligned cultures after Angolan independence. As a literal representation of the pre-independence dominant literary movement "Vamos descobrir Angola [Let's discover Angola]" that urged young writers to represent indigenous cultural traditions and histories in their work, the encounter between the team and the servants suggest a process of national internal discovery only possible as the colonial period ends. It is useful here to consider Amílcar Cabral's postulation that the problem of "discovering" a native history is one that is particular to the *assimilado*[14] classes in Lusophone Africa, since the vast majority of the population had little to no contact with

[13] "Quianda" refers to the water deities that are central to Kimbundu cosmogonies, used in lowercase to denote each of the deitites that inhabit rivers and lakes, and with a capital to denote the most important of these deities, the goddess of the sea.

[14] *Assimilados* were those African citizens of Portuguese colonies who had acquired the social and educational standing to be considered among the *petite bourgeoisie* of the colonial centers. The literal translation of "assimilated" implies leaving behind their "Africanness" to assume a quasi-Portuguese identity—"quasi" because they are always marked as different.

the colonizer's cultural media (Cabral *Documentário* 212-13). The *griot*'s story is a collective one narrated on behalf of multiple generations of populations who suffered colonial violence, and yet it is left unresolved as the team continues their journey, bringing the *griot* with them as a witness to the priests' demise. The passage suggests a role for literature in post-independence Angola that might both reconfigure histories and point to a progressive future, as the *griot*'s story does. However, the novel does not synthesize these two possibilities, suggesting that the process of throwing off colonial epistemologies and assuming a new national and revolutionary model will not be simple.

The violence of the servants' condition is explored further in the text. In a passage that grotesquely ridicules the religiously sanctioned violence inflicted on colonial subjects, Dom Junqueira, the first Father Superior of the monastery when it is established, catches the servants imitating him after they spy him masturbating while observing the cloistered nuns on the island. Dom Junqueira punishes the servants by ordering them to construct a tower reaching up to the heavens, but finds his intended lesson is misinterpreted since for the workers, the local legends replace his intended Biblical context. The tower represents for the servants not the futile tower of Babel but the story of the successful journey of the mythical Catanda, who was able to steal the moon from the sky. As part of their punishment, the servants must then construct crosses of wood and climb up in the tower while Dom Junqueira sets fire to it, praying "perdoai-lhes senhor! que não sabem o que fazem! [pardon them Lord! for they know not what they do!]" (Rui *Memória De Mar* 68). Dom Junqueira unwittingly takes the role of Christ's Roman persecutors by unjustly condemning the servants to death on the cross; the irony

of his prayer for their forgiveness is not only his own culpability for the act of violence, but that he is begging forgiveness from the wrong deity. Fulfilling the prophesy that the *griot* repeats to the group of investigators, the water-goddess Quianda swells up and takes the population of monks with her in retribution for the Portuguese colonial sins.

The sea-goddess's revenge upon the Portuguese priests mocks the centrality of the sea and the Voyage to the Portuguese colonial imaginary. Beyond simply the victim taking revenge upon the victimizer, the narrative points to a complex system of post-colonial erasure, where the terms of colonial conquest and violence are not forgotten, but are evacuated of their previous significance—the means through which the colonizer arrive—and charged with a new narrative potential. Quianda's vengeance both wipes away the Portuguese settlement and sets the servants adrift on the waters between island and mainland, neither colonial victims nor yet protagonists in the anti-colonial war. They can recount a past history, but do not yet have the opportunity of looking toward the future.

It is not until the end of the story-telling that the reader discovers that the sequence of events resulting in the slaughter of the servants had taken place generations before the moment of the quinhentos. In the same way that the roving group of ex-slaves/ servants represent a co-habitation of generations of colonial history, the Portuguese monks are not distinguished by generations; the lack of differentiation among the generations of their presence on the island in the eyes of the servants suggests a continuity of violence through the whole five hundred years of the Portuguese colonial presence in Angola. The other major method of colonial penetration—military—is

similarly ridiculed, and the final Portuguese military push on the eve of the 1975 turnover is similarly collapsed into the previous five hundred years of military oppression.

As the investigators vacillate between just before and just after the quinhentos, a group of drunken military commanders aboard a Portuguese military submarine off the coast of Luanda awaits the signal to surface and celebrate their expected victory, won with the help of an international coalition: "Ao norte os zairenses, mercenários e os aprendizes de Holden[15]. Cá em baixo os sul-africanos, o elp[16] e as multidões de Savimbi[17]. Aliás, estão praticamente liquidados os meios de transporte dos comunistas. Tragam-me um mapa – e, num trago, bebeu o gin já sem gelo [To the North the Zairians, mercenaries and the followers of Holden. Down there the South Africans, the ELP and Savimbi's mob. In fact, the means of transport of the communists are practically liquidated. Bring me a map – and in one swallow, he drank the gin now without ice" (Rui *Memória De Mar* 79). The commander's utter confidence in his network of international allies belies his imminent demise, when the submarine surfaces and is immediately fired upon and sunk. Phyllis Peres points to this passage as signaling the potential bridge from colonialism to neo-imperialism in Angola (Peres 97), indicating the internal alliances that continue to operate under foreign influence after Portugal officially relinquishes

[15] Holden Roberto (1923-2007) was the leader of the Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (National Front for Angolan Liberation- FNLA), a revolutionary anti-colonial party supported by the UN, the USA and Zaire's Mobuto Sese Seko during the colonial wars.

[16] Exército de Libertação de Portugal (Army for the Liberation of Portugal)- a pro-Salazar, anti-leftist terrorist organization formed after the Carnation Revolution (April 25, 1974)

[17] Jonas Savimbi (1934-2002) was the charismatic leader who split with Holden Roberto in 1964 to form the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola- UNITA). Opposing the then-communist allied MPLA, Savimbi created allies with the South African Apartheid government and the United States.

sovereignty. The scene also serves, however, as an ironic evocation of Portugal in the twilight of its colonial enterprise as little more than a pawn in international Cold War politics—among its "allies" count two anti-colonial parties and a South African army invading over the Angolan border from the south, both supported by a network of invisible international allies including the United States and China.

The commander's anxiety to "win the war," cavalierly allying itself with entities who oppose Portugal's supposed national interests, points both to the absurdity of the colonial enterprise and to its irrelevance in the future of a larger political ideological struggle. Allegiances in the war are, as the lover of a Portuguese officer points out, just emblems that one wears "como podia trazer o do sporting ou benfica[18]. Cá e mesmo em Portugal convinha-me trazer um emblema de um movimento [like one would wear that of Sporting or Benfica. Here and even in Portugal it seemed like a good idea to wear the emblem of some movement]" (Rui *Memória De Mar* 84). The wordplay between the commander's orders to bring him a map and his swallow of gin—the command "tragam" is similar to the verb "tragar/ trago," "to swallow," points to the difficulty he has in "swallowing" the reality of the end of empire. The appearance of a shipwrecked monk and a sixteenth-century Portuguese vice-roy, complete with a band of sword-brandishing soldiers ready to defend the integrity of the empire, further mocks and ironizes the place of Portuguese colonialism in the late-twentieth century world.

Like in the case of Carpentier's novel, the pro-revolutionary party that is derided as communists by the Portuguese officials just before they sink into the ocean provides a

[18] Lisbon's two rival professional soccer teams

discursive counter-narrative to the neo-imperialist networks that threaten to take over the Cuban and Angolan national and cultural spaces. It is the notion of worldwide revolution that provides the counter-discourse to the colonial/ neocolonial threats, represented in two surreal scenes in the novel. Upon returning to the island two years after the quinhentos, the investigators find that the monks' former houses are now occupied by talking burros who have taken over the space so completely that it is "impossível que os padres possam voltar à ilha [impossible that the priests could return to the island]" (Rui *Memória De Mar* 64). The priests have brought total destruction upon themselves, from which they can never recover. The burros, "made conscious" and thus able to talk through their allegiance to revolution, literally defecate in the Portuguese places of worship. The farcical narration of anthropomorphized animals joining the anti-colonial movements points to the necessity of revolutionary theoretical tools as the way of making the demands of the colonized intelligible on a collective scale.

In the second scene, the end of the text moves to an imagined future in which the colonial history of Angola, now in a utopian phase of universal peace, is reduced to a series of decaying relics under the sea. In the imagined future, the Island of the Padres has become the Island of the Pioneers, one of the few overt textual marks of allegiance to a world socialist movement, and consists of an idyllic space with carefully cultivated gardens, frolicking children, and a statue of Quianda in the center of a shimmering pool (*Memória De Mar* 116). However, this future remains unconfirmed. Breaking the spell of the utopian dream, the historian informs the others, "temos de voltar para hoje… porque o limite do sonho é sempre o real [we have to return to today… because the limits of

dreams is always reality]" (*Memória De Mar* 118). The narrator's final hesitant act is to "assassinar o maravilhoso com a insomnia do tempo [assassinate the marvelous with the insomnia of time]" (*Memória De Mar* 119), shutting his eyes as his pen inscribes the date of 1978 on the final page of an unnamed text, assumedly the novel itself. The adjective "marvelous" in the final paragraph of the text records both the euphoria of an independent national future, dreamed of for so long it seemed like fantasy, and that future's uncertain path.

This final moment of the novel signals not only a historical moment in which utopia is distant and unreal, but also the role of literature in the post-revolutionary era to negotiate the distance between the "real," the "historical" and the "dream". Rui, like Carpentier, directs critical irony not necessarily toward the notion of revolution, but toward a dedication to revolutionary ideology that forecloses the possibility of recognizing and reacting to current social realities. *Memória de mar* avoids all mention of concrete socio-historical markers after Angolan independence, and yet in its clear differentiation between the date of 1978 and the imagined utopian future, evokes the escalating civil war, threats of sovereignty from South African invasion, and the unrealized promises of post-independence peace and prosperity.

In both Carpentier's and Rui's novels, the progress of a political process of decolonization, evoked at the moment of the Cuban Revolution in *La consagración de la primavera* and at the moment of the 1975 turnover of the country to Angolan sovereignty in *Memória de mar* are inextricably linked to a process of textual and epistemological decolonization as well. In both cases, distortions of linear time, and thus the processes

through which the colonial histories have been recorded and sanctioned are questioned and reorganized; with each of the texts, the colonial spaces are set up as exceptional places where manipulations of established narratives undermine histories written about Cuba and Angola by colonial sympathizers. However, these texts are not simply examples of "writing back to the Empire". Contextualizing the silences surrounding the texts is as important as reading the texts themselves. If, as Alejo Carpentier's tomb reads, "Hombre de *mi tiempo* soy, y *mi tiempo* trascendente es el de la *Revolución* Cubana [I am a man of my time, and my transcendental time is that of the Cuban Revolution]," the way that time is written is as important as what is written into it.

La consagración de la primavera and *Memória de mar* both end their narration at points immediately after the revolutions in their respective countries; as such, their works have been read in line with the genealogies of politically engaged literature of revolutionary euphoria that abounded among the young poets and authors who saw not only hope for their nations but hope for a worldwide network of socialist movements aligned in the decolonization movement, and promoting civil rights among Africans and the African diaspora. As we have discussed in Chapter One, the Cuban Revolution provided the new revolutionary government with the political space in which to declare not only alliances with the rest of the so-called "Third World" but also to acknowledge Cuba as an "Afro-Latino Nation". The promise that a revolutionary future would provide equality for Afro-Cubans—metonymized in the body of *La consagración*'s Calixo—placed the concerns of racism inherited form the colonial system in the past, while the

cycle of revolution begun in 1959 suggested in its futurity that such problems would dissipate with histories narrated from colonial and neo-colonial perspectives.

Marxist ideology plays a similar role among Angolan intellectuals of the first years following independence in Angola. Russell Hamilton traces the tug-and-pull among intellectuals after Angolan independence who sought to produce "universal literature" although deliberately avoiding a prescriptive socialist realism, and the desire to encode an Angolanized version of Portuguese (Hamilton 145-46) differentiated from the metropolitan language. The debate centers, to a certain extent, on the desire to use revolutionary ideology to suppress discussions of race and class in the new Angola. This strategy helped the MPLA to fit into a discourse of a hemispheric or global notion of revolutionary independence, but also opened it to accusations of glossing over the regional conflicts and refusing to address accusations of "tribalism" within its ranks. This dynamic is one of the central conflicts of Pepetela's most well-recognized novel *Mayombe*. The absence of these conflicts in *Memória de mar* suggests that within revolutionary orthodoxy, there might not be sufficient space for debates about the concrete conflicts among populations that are linked together largely through historical domination.

Neither Carpentier's nor Rui's novel is an example of naïve optimism, and neither novel glosses over the social problems that both Cuban and Angolan societies must deal with once the revolutions are underway. A telling passage from Rui's novel foreshadows the more cutting irony with which the novelist treats the post-independence period in later works. As the investigators excavate the sunken submarine, confused with a

sixteenth-century shipwreck by its archaic artifacts, the historian is fascinated by the extensive library aboard the ship, which

> conservava livros de cinco séculos, a maioria deles dedicados à táctica e estratégia de navegar e penetrar no continente. Todos eles estavam escritos em português. Nem um só livro científico escrito numa das línguas originárias do continente. Nem um só manual de ciência política. Um livro de plantar árvores. Um guia de colher frutas. Apenas um catecismo em quimbundo, datado de 1642 e com a seguinte indicação: <<obra póstuma composta pelo padre jesuíta Francisco Pacónio>>. (*Memória De Mar* 110)

> [conserved books from five centuries, the majority of them dedicated to tactics and strategies for sailing and invading the continent. All of them were written in Portuguese. Not a single scientific book written in one of the languages that originated on the continent. A book on planting trees. A guide to harvesting fruit. Scarcely one catechism in Quimbundu, dated 1642 and with the following inscription: <<posthumous work compiled by the Jesuit priest Francisco Pacónio>>].

This passage does not solely point to the neglect of the colonizers for the economic and political development of the colonies and their complete ignorance of its languages and cultures. It also points to an uncertain future for a new nation caught up in an escalating civil war, in which the dream of the revolutionary future is stifled by a civil war that serves, in the rhetoric of the MPLA and its allies, as a proxy for a colonial war.

CONCLUSIONS

Even if, in both novels, revolution has the potential to be a libratory strategy by overturning colonial and neocolonial regimes, the ironic tone with which their implementation is narrated is fundamental as a critical strategy. Reading both novels as ironic renditions of narratives of revolutionary progress opens up a space for interpretation, simultaneous signified meanings, and side-roads to communication that refuse a straightforward proposal for the national futures of Cuba and Angola. If we read into the notion of revolution in both novels a tension between ideal and praxis, between perception of injustice and the organization of that perception into text, we can also read a similar ludic uncertainty into the very histories that the novels narrate. That is, by textually organizing and disciplining the "writing of histories," the novels point to the paradoxical effect of self-undermining that historical novels accomplish.

Both Carpentier's and Rui's public personas would seem to be at odds with the narrative voices expressed in *La consagración de la primavera* and *Memória de mar*. The two authors served as early political functionaries in their respective socialist-aligned revolutionary parties, in positions that gave them significant influence over the artistic landscapes of the early revolutionary years- Alejo Carpentier as director of the Editorial Nacional de Cuba, among other government positions, and Manuel Rui as a founding member of the Angolan Writers Union, Angolan Artists' Union, and various ministerial positions. The relatively orthodox nature of each author's public images serves to heighten the ironic tension in their novels, however. Carpentier maintains a public voice that unfailingly supports the Revolution, both its ideals and its outcome, and seems to be

seen in such a way in other socialist-sympathetic contexts. In a similar manner to Rui's novel, Carpentier frequently evokes the five hundred years of Spanish colonialism as the conditions that the current "historical cycle" overturns, and the Revolution is cast as an almost prophetic event foreseen in the resistance of the first Americans to the conquistadores. He writes in 1976 that in the Americas, past present and future, live in simultaneity ("Problemática" 204), a notion that has been explored in terms of the repetitive nature of the historical moments discussed. The future, for the author, is one of "contingencies," rather than fulfilled potential. Ileana Rodríguez rather sarcastically reads in this notion either a skeptical stance on the part of the author or authorial "incompetence" (107) at recounting political events. Clearly, neither Rodríguez nor other astute readers of Carpentier's works place him in the latter category. Nonetheless, González Echevarría points to the struggle that Carpentier's writing displays between pledging his support to the new regime and the historical complexities that he sees it making visible.

Commenting on Carpentier's theorization of the American baroque, González Echevarría suggests that Carpentier situates the uniqueness of Latin American writing at the nexus of "citation" of contexts emanating from other places, such that "the text… is a ruse, an evasive gesture that points to itself as a beginning that never was, but knows that it is instead a future of that beginning, its ultimate end" (González Echevarría *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home* 224). This is perhaps an apt description of both the process of revolution evoked in Carpentier's novels, as well as a way of theorizing the interplay between textual practice and textual representation. The Revolution with which

La consagración de la primavera culminates is precisely that which, in writing itself, must cast itself as the culmination of the previous failed movements that Vera and Enrique abandon when they return to Cuba, but an end that serves as an ironic one, that will become a beginning as the next historical cycle sweeps around and translates the "revolutionary impulse" into a new linguistic and geographical context.

In revolutionary Angola, Carpentier is eulogized just after his death in the literary journal *Lavra e Oficina* both as an author whose ideas were "compatible with socialism" and as one whose works "served the interests of the peoples of his continent" (N. 12)[19]. These are indeed aspects that Manuel Rui outlines in a series that appears in the same magazine four years earlier, debating the terms of a new "engaged" literature in post-revolutionary Angola. Reflecting an almost Hegelian notion of the social actor, Rui points to the function of the revolutionary artist as filling in the gap between the "collective dream" and the "contradictions of the present reality" ("Literatura e ideologia (1)" 4). What cannot be minimized or ignored, in the case particularly of Rui's novel, is the very real practical implications of revolution as a literal decolonization strategy from Portugal. It is significant to the history of Angola that the only concrete historical specificities evoked are those relevant to important moments in the narration of the colonial enterprise. While this textual strategy reflects, as the conclusion to the novel

[19] It is interesting to note that in this eulogy, the two works by Carpentier the author mentions as "best known" include *El siglo de las luces* and *La consagración de la primavera*, not least because the latter novel had received mixed to negative reviews, and does not seem to have been as widely disseminated nor as readily translated as Carpentier's other novels. Its first translation into Portuguese appears to have been in 1987, seven years after Carpentier's death. Such a mention begs the question of to what extent the expectation of Carpentier's only novel directly addressing the Cuban Revolution was as highly anticipated in other socialist-allied countries, beyond his Latin American audience.

notes, a complete absence of Angolan history from the perspective of Angolans, it also signals the early attempts of the MPLA to suppress ethnic and tribal divisions, in the name of promoting national unity. This is a core strategy of Angolan socialism that finds certain parallels in the celebration of the Americas as the continent of "symbiosis".

However, such a strategy, as Onésimo Silveira points out, is one of the primary factors in the post-colonial crises (303) experienced repeatedly across Sub-Saharan Africa. Thus the underlying suspicion which creates an ironic structural tension in writing about a revolutionary future in *Memória de mar* stems less from a grandiose contemplation of the translatability of historical cycles into a certain place or time, as Carpentier's novels evidence, but rather from the context of an ongoing war driven by ethnic tensions and international conflicts inherited from the colonial era and translated into the post-colonial one. In Rui's later novels, overarching considerations of the ideological motivations behind political action on a national or regional level disappear, although the author maintains in a 1988 interview that the process of independence and its contingent notions of collectivity, nationality and community are inseparable from the revolutionary process that ushered in independence ("Encontro Com Manuel Rui" 732). Thus in neither Carpentier's nor Rui's case can the irony underlying the narration of the revolutionary process be read as a denunciation or rejection of it. What both Carpentier's and Rui's novels have in common, however, is a recognition that the organization and implementation of such a revolution- metaphorized in the textual practice of narrating the historical contexts of these revolutions—is irreducibly complicated, unpredictable, and at least partially untranslatable.

Chapter 3: Underneath Whitening: Reinaldo Arenas' *La loma del angel* and José Eduardo Agualusa's *Nação crioula*

INTRODUCTION

From the Cuban neo-baroque to the contemporary literary "mashup" exemplified in Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009), New World literary studies have concerned themselves with appropriation and cannibalization of Old World literary tropes and texts. The vertical relationships thus inscribed—center to periphery, metropolis to colony—demand recognition of political and cultural power differentials and encode the history of the colonial relationship through which New World cultures have developed. However, these linear relationships are complicated in such literary cannibalistic texts such as Cuban Reinaldo Arenas' (1943-1990) *La loma del angel* [*Angel Hill*] (1987) and Angolan J. E. Agualusa's (b. 1960) *Nação crioula* [*Creole*] (1998), which represent rewritings of texts occupying peripheral spaces relative to hegemonic European cultural sources, nineteenth century Cuban novelist Cirilo Villaverde's (1812-1894) *Cecilia Valdés* (1882), and nineteenth-century Portuguese novelist Eça de Queirós's (1845-1900) character Fradique Mendes. As canonical works in their respective literary corpuses, Villaverde's and Eça de Queirós' texts nonetheless propose permutations of the colonial power narratives that are critiqued and parodied in Arenas' and Agualusa's cannibalistic novels. In each case, notions of racial mixing—

"mulataje" and "creolidade"[20]—as a result of the trans-Atlantic slave trade serves as a cultural code that evokes a history of idealized spaces and New World racial utopias represented in the biological offspring of African and European parents. Agualusa and Arenas take up these idealized cultural imaginaries through textual parodies of "foundational" national works that reflect in their textual construction the racial idealization of *mulataje/ creolidade* that their texts ridicule.

In this case, I am pointing to the foundational status vis-à-vis national Cuban and Portuguese culture of both Villaverde's and Eça's novels. Villaverde's and Arenas' works take up what Aníbal Quijano calls the "colonialidad del poder [coloniality of power]," or the reproduction of colonial relationships and epistemological violence in situations of extreme power differential (Quijano 202-03), such as between the white Cuban elite and *mulato* and black populations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Eça de Queirós' work as it is reflected in Agualusa's, by contrast, evokes Portugal as a peripheral and ineffective colonial power that represents what Boaventura Sousa Santos terms a "subaltern colonialism," by nature of its marginal situation relative to Europe and the world capitalist system (Santos), formulating criticisms of Portugal as a colonial power that reverberate for a century after Eça's death. The twentieth-century novels analyzed in this chapter both take up discourses of whitening via *mulataje* and *creolidade*

[20] "Mulataje," a term used in the Hispanophone Caribbean, and "creolidade," a term used particularly in Lusophone Africa, both describe the process of "racial" mixing, particularly among white and black populations and cultural expressions. See Rahier, Jean Muteba. "Mestizaje, mulataje and mestiçagem in Latin American Ideologies of National Identities". *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 8 (1): 40-51; Buscaglia-Salgado, José F. *Undoing Empire: Race and Nation in the Mulatto Caribbean*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2003; and Andrade, Mário Pinto de. *Origens Do Nacionalismo Africano*. Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 1998.

as they are re-read in the post-revolutionary eras and reflect these discourses in their "mixed" textual parodies. The novels reveal that notions of *mulato* and *crioulo* bodies also serve as metaphors for the textual operations of literary parody and thus point to larger exchanges of these discourses than simply within one nation. The trans-Atlantic circulation of cultural tropes and literary texts, therefore, serve both as the vehicle for the creation of racial utopian imaginaries in the nineteenth century, and for their exposure and dismantling at the end of the twentieth.

Central to both Arenas' and Agualusa's novels are the Luso-Brazilian and Cuban discourses of "whitening," nineteenth-century ideologies that looked upon a gradual "whitening" process of African-descended people in the Portuguese and Spanish colonies, particularly in the Americas, as a solution to the "race problem" that a free black population after the abolition of slavery would introduce. The archetypical representative figure of the whitening process in both Cuban and Luso-Brazilian literatures is the *mulata*, the almost-white woman who is frequently portrayed as beautiful, graceful, well-mannered and educated, and often morally superior (although not always, as we shall see with Cecilia Valdés) to the white women who surround her. She is frequently a tragic figure because she can never be fully assimilated as truly white, occupying a de-sexualized, morally idealized and yet peripheral and thus melancholic existence. The protagonists of both Arenas' and Agualusa's novels reference and yet depart from representative "tragic mulatas" who undermine the myth of the mulata as a representative figure of the Cuban and Angolan or Brazilian nations, and parody the permanence of this myth as a solution to the violence inherited from slave-based social

and economic systems. Cecilia, as a sexually aggressive woman who actively seeks an exit from her marginalized social status, and Ana Olímpia, an African ex-slave and former princess who produces an idealized *mulata* daughter with her Portuguese rescuer, both force a critical reexamination of the implications of the mythologized *mulata*.

La Loma del Ángel

Reinaldo Arenas' *La loma del angel* [*Angel Hill*], published in 1987, is an overt parody of nineteenth-century Cuban novelist and intellectual Cirilo Villaverde's 1882 canonical work, the realist and abolitionist nation-building *Cecila Valdés, o La loma del angel*. Critics generally place Arenas' work in the line of younger neo-baroque artists because of his stylistic creativity, his citations neo-baroque giants such as José Lezama Lima and Virgilio Piñera, and his focus on the creative and plastic priority of literary language.

Arenas is also considered a contestatory writer, having suffered persecution under the Castro regime's strict policies that began to restrict state-published works to only those which the UNEAC considered supportive of the revolution. After his first novel was awarded Cuba's top literary prize and his second an honorable mention with no first-prize winner, they were both subsequently censored by the state. In the following years, Arenas suffered increasing measures of persecution both for his open criticism of revolutionary politics and important political figures including Fidel Castro, and for his homosexuality.

After escaping from Cuba in the 1980 Mariel exodus, Arenas lived the rest of his life as an exile in the United States until his death in 1990. His situation parallels Cirilo

Villaverde's forty-five year U.S. exile (1849-1894), which began after he was apprehended by Spanish authorities for his participation in pro-independence movements. Both Arenas and Villaverde continued their active participation in the political and intellectual circles through continued publication in the United States. Neither author returned to Cuba before their deaths in exile.

Arenas himself, in the prologue to *La loma del ángel*, calls the work not a reproduction or a summary of Villaverde's novel[21], but an imaginative version of what "yo hubiese escrito en su lugar. Traición, naturalmente [I would have written in his place. Treason, naturally]" (*La Loma* 10). By drawing attention to the act of citation of the nineteenth-century novel, Arenas frees the text from both accusations of imitation and lays out an aesthetic project in which the imaginative use of language takes precedence over the originality of the formal elements of the plot. The direction that this originality will take in the text is further signaled by the epigraph citing Lezama, an appeal to the "Ángel de la jiribilla, ruega por nosotros. Y sonríe [Angel of the *jiribilla*, pray for us. And smile]" (*La Loma* 13). "*Jiribilla*," a Cubanism that refers to constant movement or inquietude and can be applied either to a person or metaphorically, as Lezama uses it, to poetic creation. The quote, taken from Lezama's posthumously entitled essay "Lectura," or "El ángel de la Jiribilla" refers to the figure of the *jiribilla* as the "fabulosa resistencia de la familia cubana … el alba de la era poética entre nosotros [the fabulous resistance of the Cuban family… the dawn of our poetic era]" (Lezama Lima 111). The quote thus

[21] The comment also mocks the relative length of the novels. Arenas' novel, at a relatively scant 158 pages, could well be a "summary" of Villaverde's 638-page work in the Cátedra edition.

points to the importance of irreverent and polyphonic meaning, creative interaction with Cuban letters and the Cuban canon, and laughter—which creates a destabilizing effect on the text, according to Baktin—as fundamental elements of Arenas' novel. In addition, the idea of the "familia cubana," taken here to refer to the national literary genealogy upon which Arenas' text comments, opens the text to a self-referential criticism, especially in the context of the prominence of incest in Villaverde's novel as well as Arenas' reading of it. As a reference to the nervous creative energy of Cecilia's sexual encounters and Arenas' association throughout his work of sexual energy and artistic creation, the notion of the *jiribilla* points to the creative potential in the instability of its originary material.

The plot of Villaverde's *Cecilia Valdés* revolves around the romantic interests of Cecilia, a free "almost white" *mulata* woman. Cecilia's family background represents the very trajectory that is idealized as a national discourse: her great-grandmother the "negra de nación" [black woman born in Africa] Amalia Alarcón, is the matriarch of four generations of progressively whiter women—doña Josefa, Rosario Alarcón, Cecilia and her daughter born at the end of both Arenas' and Villaverde's novels. Cecilia falls in love with the white aristocrat Leonardo Gamboa, convinced he will marry her since she can almost "pass" for white. Leonardo, who unbeknownst to either of them is her half brother, is engaged to the aristocratic but unfeminine Isabel Ilincheta, while the *mulato* tailor and musician, José Dolores, falls in love with Cecilia. The love triangles point to, as Gema Guevara notes, the strict and hierarchical social boundaries that governed racial mixing, or "blanqueamiento," whitening, in nineteenth-century Cuba. As Guevara and other contemporary critics signal, the figure of the *mulata* woman comes to symbolize

both the "whitened" nation that Villaverde and other abolitionists theorized, where the black African slave bodies would slowly be contained and transformed—whitened—by a process of gradual miscegenation (Sánchez-Eppler 85). This process would both serve the increasing pressure from among Cuban elites for national independence from Spain, by "Cubanizing" and domesticating the Others, black slaves, and "solve" the problem of the position of these slaves in Cuban society. The whitening process of the black bodies would represent a slow process of civilization and acculturation, to *criollo* values, as well as theorized a path that would neutralize the "threat" of blackness, both in terms of "polluting" the white race and in collective action such as slave uprisings.[22] Arroyo points to Villaverde's emphasis on José Dolores' recognition of his "whiteness" doubled in Leonardo Gamboa, and Leonardo's recognition of José Dolores as a kind of shadow-brother (Arroyo 93), suggesting that this double recognition serves to reinforce sameness, reducing the estranging effect of the black other.

As both Sara Rosell and Jorge Olivares discuss, Arenas' novel can be read as a reversal and undermining of this process of blanqueamiento (Rosell); (Olivares 172-73), both in terms of the racialization of the characters, through which a strict hierarchy of color-based classes is established and a process of national whitening is introduced, and through the limitations and restrictions on this process that spoken and unspoken rules enforced. The body of criticism on Arenas' works repeatedly refers to a "carnivalesque"

[22] The paralyzing fear that the mass increase in the slave population in Cuba in the early 19th century represented for the white criollo elite was not simply ideological. The upper classes feared slave revolts and other outbreaks of violence against them. Works such as Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's 1976 film *La última cena* [*The Last Supper*] dramatize both the fear that the black population inspired in the *criollos* and the brutal violence that repressing any expression of revolt or retaliation provoked against the slaves.

subversion and ludic unhinging of Arenas' text from Villaverde's, often, as Rosell claims, without a concrete proposal to replace that which he ridicules. However, this chapter will read Arenas' work in the context of two important contextual tendencies: the "third-world turn" toward world black and African diasporic solidarity of official characterizations of Cuban national culture through the first decades of revolution, as we have discussed in Chapter 1, as well as the allegorical comparisons that Arenas draws between the repression of artistic freedom which he declaims repeatedly in his literary works after 1959, and the repressions of the colonial regime and the system of plantation slavery in nineteenth-century Cuba evoked in *La loma del ángel.* Arenas' "blackening" of *La loma del ángel*, ridiculing notions of racial synthesis, will be read as a criticism of the Cuban revolution's tendencies to promote a similar notion of idealized racial mixing as part of the ideology of equality after revolution. The stratified society and repression of the underprivileged through a racialized caste system in the nineteenth century is also evoked in Arenas' work as a mode of comparison to the Revolution's authoritarian enforcement of political and social policies.

In *La loma del ángel*, Cecilia Valdés is the youngest in a line of illegitimate *mulata* daughters of African-descended mothers and white, slave-owning fathers. Destined to repeat the history of her mother Rosario, who is shut in a church home after Cecilia is taken from her, Cecilia Valdés grows up with her grandmother ignorant of her parentage. Confirming the worst fears of her grandmother, Cecilia falls in love with her half-brother Leonardo Gamboa, convinced that if she can hide her African heritage, he will marry her, believing her to be white. Of course, this never happens; Leonardo sees

Cecilia as no more than an opportunity for some fun, and at the end of the novel is killed in a knife fight by his rival and half-brother José Dolores Pimienta, while Cecilia, repeating the history of her mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, gives birth to the illegitimate and incestuous daughter of Leonardo Gamboa.

Critics who read Cirilo Villaverde's 1882 novel as an anti-abolition statement in its recording "Cuban customs"—a novela costumbrista—point to Leonardo and Cecilia's father Cándio Gamboa's trade as an importer of illegal slaves from West Africa. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was officially outlawed in 1818, and abolition achieved in 1886. Villaverde's novel points to the importation of slaves as a sign of plantation slavery and the slave trade as "blackening" the population, threatening the whitening process, the slave owners, and civil society itself. This is a discourse that Arenas picks up deliberately, achieving in his text a deliberate "blackening" of Villaverde's version of the story, in whose version the African elements should be suppressed and eventually eliminated. Arenas achieves this "blackening" through techniques such as writing the speech of the slaves phonetically, closely approximating typical twentieth-century Cuban accents, developing marginal and ingenious characters who make the oppressive system work to their advantage, and twisting around iconic episodes from Villaverde's novel in such a way so as to expose the ideological bias on which national whitening is based.

Several of these episodes show how Arenas ridicules the idealization of the whitening process. Revealing and ridiculing the strict gendered operations of "blanqueamiento," which, as Guevara discusses, takes place through non-state sanctioned encounters between upper-class white men and black or *mulata* women, as Cecilia

Valdés' heritage reveals, or through state-sanctioned unions between lower-class white men and higher-class black or *mulata* women. Citing Anne McClintock's notion of dangerous gendered nationalities which "represent relations to political power and to the technologies of violence"(352), Guevara notes that while legal marriages between white, aristocratic men and women of color were unlikely, a woman's white color—regardless of her social standing—served both as a marker of her as a symbol of the "whitened" nation, and also restricted her agency. White women were the visible object through which the impossibility of "whitening" as either a feasible project or a means of liberation is made clear: she is protected as the "keeper of the white race," in a way that the *mulata* woman might imitate, but only approximate, and is "jealously guarded and prohibited to men of color" (110).

In undermining these restrictions and taboos through portraying an extra-marital child that Doña Rosa, Don Cándido Gamboa's wife, seeks to have with her black slave Dionisio, Arenas draws a parallel between the allegorical family-as-nation trope in Villaverde's novel and the state-sanctioned notions of family in revolutionary Cuba. Doña Rosa finds out that her husband has had a beautiful daughter with a *mulata* woman, who, Dionisio assures her, looks "igualitica que su hija, la niña Adela [just like your daughter, Adela]" (*La Loma* 25), and decides that in retribution, she will force Dionisio to impregnate her with a black baby: "De un negro, oyó!... Que ya mi honor ha sido bien reparado [with a black baby, hear!... Now my honor has been restored]" (26). The baby turns out to be José Dolores, Cecilia's would-be lover. The transgressive nature of Doña Rosa's duplicating of Don Cándido's indiscretions both ridicules and undermines the

"naturalized" national narratives of the nineteenth century as well as the late twentieth century. The notion of restoring her "honor" by bearing a black baby conceived through forced sex with her slave not only mocks the notion of the white aristocratic female body as the repository of national and racial "honor," but also signals the abuse to which Dionisio is subject as nothing but a tool for her retribution against her husband.

Doña Rosa's actions undermine the double orientation of Villaverde's national project toward whitening the population of people of color, while maintaining the source of the racial ideal in the metaphorical white woman-as-nation. Doña Rosa's revenge both unmasks this tendency and derails its teleological intent. Indeed, when Doña Rosa goes to the convent to secretly give birth, she finds that the convent scarcely has room for the number of babies who are born there in similar circumstances, some from violent and forced encounters between slaves and masters, as José Dolores is, some from illicit affairs between women of color and white fathers, as Cecilia Valdés is, and some from the visits of the "Angel," the dressed-up bishop and priest who "descend" upon the pious women of Havana, leaving them pregnant with the "immaculate" children who are, in reality, simply the representations of an unchecked excess of sexual desire and abuse of authority.

Doña Rosa's rape of her slave and her subsequent child mocks and undermines all sources of literal and metaphorical authority upon which national narratives of Cuba are founded, not only in its violation of sexual and racial taboos, but in its parody of the sexual overtones to a scene in which Doña Rosa observes the naked sleeping body of her son after giving in to his demands for a new gold watch, against his father's wishes

(Villaverde 193-94). Don Cándido, the allegorical authoritarian Cuban father, undercuts his own command by inciting his wife to infidelity, resulting at once in both the "whitening" of the offspring of Dionisio and the "blackening" of her own children. Beyond the doubling of these actions with his own *mulata* daughter, Don Cándido is an illegal slave trader who is ironically contributing to the increase in the enslaved population on the island. Beyond the racial implications of this "blackening" act, the sources of moral authority—the church and the upper classes—are revealed to have no authority in this realm whatsoever.

Arenas' expression of disappointment relies precisely in this "democratizing" effect of the carnivalesque portrayals of his characters. The opposition that the text creates between the sexual excess, intrigue, revenge and deceit of the interactions among the characters, and the teetering notion of national unity, "naturalized" narrative of nation and strict structures of sanction and authority create the bridge between the double parody of Villaverde's text and its ideological positions and the commentary that Arenas offers of late-twentieth century Cuba. Beyond solely revealing the tenuous and rotten foundations of the command that the figures of authority hold, Arenas' novel creates a world of unstable tension between the ill-fated figures such as Cecilia Valdés, destined to repeat her mother's and grandmother's history while her daughter's father, Leonardo Gamboa, abandons her to marry the wealthy Isabel Ilincheta. Their offspring, reflecting Arroyo's notion of "brotherhood" this time among members of the *mulato* class, creates a growing population of José Dolores Pimientas, poised to overthrow the patriarch. José Dolores is the figure who, at the end of Arenas' novel, murders Leonardo Gamboa on his

wedding day; don Cándido discovers that Isabel Ilincheta will have Leonardo's child nonetheless, and despairing of his lost fortune to the new heir, compels his slave to murder him, an order that the man is only too happy to complete.

Arenas' ridicule of notions of whitening and blackening are not limited only to the biological offspring of transgressive sexual encounters. In several other episodes of the novel, the notion of nationalist discourse as complicit with the hegemony of power is completely destabilized. The figure of Cecilia Valdés, despite refusing to embody the "moral doubling" of the ideal white virtuous woman, recalls the "tragic *mulata*" because she embodies both the outward marker of the ostensible goals of a creolized national body—appearing "casi blanca," almost white—while at the same time showing that "white" and "almost white" are two inassimilable categories. As Homi Bhabha has argued, the colonized figure who "mimics" the colonizer in a near-perfect manner only serves to underline the ontological separation between the two categories of existence. In Villaverde's text, this dynamic reveals how slavery corrupts society at every level; Cecilia's *negrero* father puts his own indulgence of vices, pursuit of profits and of an aristocratic title above the interests of the larger Cuban (proto-)national community. In Arenas' novel, in which humor is the dominant mode through which bodies become "whitened"—or not—, the very in-verisimilitude of these episodes reveals "narration of the nation" as essentially creative and fanciful acts, but ones that are enforced and reproduced through violent and authoritarian means.

The first episode that demonstrates this reality occurs as Cecilia prepares to meet Leonardo Gamboa for a "date," convinced that if she can only hide her mixed-race

origins, Leonardo cannot help but fall in love with her, despite her mother's and grandmother's admonitions that Leonardo would never be taken in by her duplicity. In order to accomplish this, she paints her great-grandmother Amalia's whole body with white paint over her great-grandmother's protests that "siempre he sio negra y me gusta serlo. Déjame al menos morirme con eta coló. [I've always been black and I like it. At least let me die this color]" (*La Loma* 87). With one breast left unpainted as Leonardo arrives at the house, Cecilia, of course, fails to trick her lover, and after their amorous encounter, as Cecilia finishes up the paint job, Leonardo slyly comments upon Amalia's deathly pallid complexion. At that moment, "no se sabe si fue por este hecho o por un mal golpe propinado inconscientemente por los amantes mientras se refocilaban, pero el caso es que esa misma mañana Amalia Alarcón, negra de nación nacida en Guinea, moría en Cuba cien años después completamente blanca [we'll never know if it was a result of this act, or by an unfortunate knock the lovers gave her as they had their fun, but the truth is that that same morning, Amalia Alarcón, black woman born in Guinea, died in Cuba one hundred years later completely white]" (89). Whether read as a overt mocking of Cecilia's fictitious manipulation of her family history in order to gain social standing, or a sly commentary on the similarly manipulated notions of national history-making, Amalia's white-painted body talks back against these naturalized histories. Amalia is either killed by the very process that made her "white" or by the advantages won by a temporary complicity in the bodily fiction. Arenas' dramatization of the case, where Amalia's body can be read as a stand-in for the metaphorical national Cuban body, makes comically clear the contradictions of national history formation. Amalia, born in Guinea

and enslaved in Cuba, speaks in a popular Cuban accent, and has engendered four generations of Cuban *mulata* daughters. Yet, the very whitening process kills her, symbolically "erasing" her origins from the family line. But the futile nature of Cecilia's crude sham reveals that recasting the past according to the restrictive ideological demands of the present fools only the author, rather than the "readers" of such a history.

The whitening discourse is again evoked in a later episode in the novel, when the whole Gamboa family assembles on their sugar plantation to ceremoniously observe the operations of the first steam-powered sugar mill in Cuba, an ironic symbol of the Gamboa's ill-gotten wealth. In the 1886 text, the death of the slave through the malfunctioning sugar mill suggests both the un-human and machine-like way in which slave bodies and slave labor were conceived by white Cubans, as well as the casual violence with which slave bodies were sacrificed to industry. Arenas mocks these notions throughout *La loma del ángel*, such as in Leonardo's nonchalant daily murder of whatever slave is unlucky enough to be assigned to wake him in the morning. However, Arenas' version of the introduction of the *máquina de vapor* not only calls attention to the parallels between a slave society and the oppressive policies of post-revolutionary Cuba, but imagines an agency for the oppressed.

It is the very failure of the machine to operate as designed that give the slaves the means to escape from the plantation, either through death in Villaverde's novel, or through an imagined passage back to Africa in Arenas'. When the machine malfunctions during the demonstration, don Cándido sends a slave up to the escape valve to find the blockage, and the man,

> impelido por la violencia del vapor condensado, el negro, dejando una estela de humo, voló por los aires, elevándose a tal altura que se perdió de vista mucho más allá del horizonte… En menos de un minuto cientos de ellos se treparon descalzos al gigantesco y candente lomo metálico y al grito de 'A la Guinea!' se introducían por el tubo de escape, cruzando de inmediato, a veces por docenas, el horizonte. (109)
>
> [spurred on by the violence of the condensed steam, the slave, leaving behind only a puff of smoke, flew through the air at such a height that he disappeared beyond the horizon… In less than a minute, hundreds of unshod slaves climbed up the large, red-hot metallic machine and with a shout of "To Guinea!" got into the escape tube, immediately passing beyond the horizon, sometimes by the dozens].

The violent death of the slave in Villaverde's novel serves to highlight the callous way that "expendable" slave bodies are reduced to human agricultural machinery, and yet is twisted in Arenas' into one in which the slaves use the machinery to their advantage to escape the sugar plantation and the New World altogether, befuddling the Gamboas. In fact, don Cándido accuses the British, the nineteenth-century naval power which policed the Atlantic for illegal slaving ships, of deliberately producing a machine designed to return the slaves to Africa, while disguising it as a sugar mill.

As an additional signal of the creativity of the slaves and their fundamental role in the creation of Cuban national culture, the flying slaves take advantage of their physical freedom while flying through the air to produce new kinds of dance that would have been impossible while tied to the ground. The flying slaves take instruments with them into the escape valve, and while flying toward Africa play drums and other instruments, taking advantage of the lack of solid earth to perform "movimientos, giros y piruetas… mucho más sincopados y audaces que los que podían haber hecho en la tierra [movements, turns and pirouettes… much more rhythmic and audacious than those that they could have done on the ground]" (96). Arena's comical creation of a "back to Africa" movement results in a cultural event of such importance to Cuban culture that, according to the narrator it is recorded by renowned twentieth-century ethnographer of Afro-Cuban culture Lydia Cabrera. This episode counters the "whitening" process by presenting slave bodies that refuse to be incorporated and disciplined into a Cuban nation. However, in a parodic twist that points to the first twentieth-century generations of authors of Afro-Cuban culture, the resistance is of such cultural significance, that it ends up being incorporated anyway.

If we follow Arenas' allegorical thread pulling nineteenth and twentieth century national narratives into contact with each other, the text points to the "release" of the slaves from the conditions of their bondage as the impetus of their creativity. Reading the notion of post-revolutionary exile into this episode, escape from the conditions of tyranny "unbinds" the cultural expression of the slaves from their restrictions, but perhaps more

importantly, it also unbinds those observers who record such phenomena in their texts from the restrictions of the same system.

It is no accident that Arenas mentions Lydia Cabrera, a fellow exile in the United States, as the observer of this episode. Across Arenas' work, the notions of political, artistic and sexual freedom—the "unbinding" of the slaves' bodies—are explicitly linked. Lydia Cabrera's presence, only one among many anachronistic introductions into the text of historical figures including Arenas and Villaverde themselves, links these notions of freedom to the exile or even death rather than continue to suffer the restrictions on expressions of these freedoms on the island.

On a textual level, many critics have read Arenas' novel through post-modern notions of the "unbinding" of authorial authority over the text, and thus embodying the notions of escape that he represents literally through the slaves who attempt to launch themselves across the ocean to an imagined freedom on the other side. As William Luis notes, Arenas "strives to decentralize an understanding of history in which historians and functionaries of the Castro government are the only authors or interpreters of Cuban history and culture" (244). And yet, is not Arenas' text tragically made possible through the very persecution and censorship that force him away from Cuba? Luis points to Arenas' claim that the "true" literature of Cuba is written from exile (246). Arenas' novel is both Cuban and not-Cuban; written near the end of his life and published off the island, it has never been edited in Cuba, and represents both a protest against the Cuban cultural policies and a protest against its own conditions of "outside". In this sense, Arenas' text occupies the "in-between" status of an authorial position that transgresses the official

national boundaries, and contests its own position-from-outside from which these notions of contest must be articulated.

Much of Arenas' work seems to collapse the configuration of post-revolutionary Cuba with the figure of Fidel Castro; Castro is represented allegorically and ridiculed in a number of Arenas' novels. In the farewell note at the end of the last work completed before his death, Arenas' autobiography *Antes que anocezca* [*Before Night Falls*] (the note is also reproduced at the end of the Miami-based Ediciones Universal edition of *La loma del ángel*), the author tells his public that, while he voluntarily puts an end to his own life,

> Ninguna de las personas que me rodean están [sic] comprometidos en esta decisión. Sólo hay un responsable: Fidel Castro. Los sufrimientos de exilio, las penas del destierro, las soledad y las enfermedades que haya podido contraer en el destierro seguramente no las hubiera sufrido de haber vivido libre en mi país
>
> [None of the people who surround me are implicated in this decision. There is only one person responsible: Fidel Castro. The suffering of exile, the sorrow of expulsion, the solitude and the disease that I have contracted in exile surely I would not have suffered living freely in my own country. (R. Arenas *Antes Que Anochezca* 343).

And yet, as the textual games of *La loma del ángel* demonstrate, not even Fidel Castro is the absolute master and author of the history-making process that Arenas' novel puts into

question. In his 2007 essay on the film adaptation of Arenas' autobiography and the documentary *Seres extravagantes* [*Odd People Out*] about Reinaldo Arenas and the repression of homosexuality in revolutionary Cuba, exiled Cuban writer Antonio José Ponte notes that director Manuel Zayas include footage of a little-known, censored speech by Fidel Castro from the 1970s, in which Castro reveals that persecution of homosexuals—whom he calls "seres extravagantes" and "sinvergüenzas [shameless]"—is the state-sanctioned policy (Zayas).

As Ponte points out, this speech turns out to be inconvenient for the post-1990s reversal of this official stance which ended official persecution of homosexual Cubans, and rather than being acknowledged, the footage of the 1970s speech is ignored and repressed from the publicly available archive. For, despite Castro's 1961 pronouncement of "dentro de la revolución todo, fuera de la revolución nada, [within the revolution, everything; outside the revolution, nothing]" even "la censura política no sólo es ejercida sobre autores problemáticos, sino que vigila también a las autoridades [political censorship is not only exercised against problematic authors but also keeps watch on the authorities]" (Ponte 56). As Zaya's documentary and Ponte's observations signal, state-sanctioned history-making moves beyond the individuals who produce it. Its continuity is guaranteed less by a consistent orthodoxy in its vision than by a continuity in its ability to reflect in the past a close alliance to the priority of the future.

Thus, the act of "recreating history" only works from the moment of the present, written under the influence of the imminent configuration of revolutionary history, where every present event represents the culmination of a past struggle. As Ponte signals, this

censorship of conflicting events in the past prevents the revolution from being cited against itself—he notes the availability of newspapers in public libraries is usually limited to only the most recent editions as well as the distant past, preventing a "disjointed" reading of official policy. As an example of such a tendency, in a 2010 interview with Fidel Castro published in the Mexican newspaper *La Jornada* and reprinted in the Cuban state newspaper *Granma*, Castro admits the error of past eras of persecution, the responsibility for which he places in the pre-revolutionary era of racial and gender prejudice as well. Interestingly, this is a perspective that Arenas shares, differeing from Castro in his conclusions. While for Castro the Revolution is a corrective to past policies of discrimination, for Arenas, as evidenced in *La loma*, the persecution that the revolution enacts against many Cuban citizens is another symptom of a long history of social injustice initiated in the colonial era. For Castro, however, the continuity of the historical process is maintained by Castro's assertion that such prejudices were "hold-overs" from before the Revolution and that he and his cabinet were too busy to properly address this discrimination in the early years of the revolution (Saade). This process of "citation in absence," a self-evident manipulation of past events in order to maintain the narrative continuity of the present is precisely the process that *La loma del ángel* draws attention to, and celebrates as that which both destabilizes and creates.

Examples of overt "self-citation" and self-parody abound in Arenas' text, both through the narrator's comments upon the novel itself, as well as the frequent citations of literary figures from Cuban letters who are woven into the chapters, and passages that reflect upon differences between Villaverde's and Arena's novels. In the chapter titled

"Nemesia Pimienta," the narrator asks a series of rhetorical questions that point to the narrative and social places of the darker-skinned, less beautiful sister of José Dolores Pimienta as a forgotten counterpoint to Cecilia Valdés as a character. While, the narrator notes, everyone around her responds to Cecilia's moods and actions, "en el caso de ella, Nemesia Pimienta, de talle y rasgos insignificantes, de pelo aún más ensortijado y de color más oscuro, ¿quién iba a reparar en su tristeza o en su (casi imposible) alegría? [in her case, Nemesia Pimienta, of insignificant size and features, even curlier hair and of a darker color, who was going to notice her sadness or (almost impossible) happiness?]" (*La Loma* 42). Directing such questions to the reader destabilizes the dependent relationship between Arenas and Villaverde as authors of their novels. Villaverde emphasizes Nemesia's unattractive qualities, suggesting the narrator, due to "narrative conventions," force him to place her in the background, where her "passions" and her "tragedies" are forgotten or never written, despite her protests. As a type of negative doubling of Cecilia, Nemesia exaggerates Cecilia's ambitions: also in love with Leonardo, she knows that he will never love her back, but once Leonardo attempts to seduce her, she decides that "aún cuando no lograse que rompiera con el amante, ni suplantarla en el amor de éste, haría al menos que él la abandonase [even though she did not succeed in making Cecilia break with her lover, or in supplanting her in the latter's affections, she would at least cause him to abandon her friend] (Villaverde 363; 256). If Nemesia cannot have Leonardo, if she cannot be part of the narrative of "national whitening," then she will make sure the Cecilia cannot be either.

As a counterpoint to Cecilia, Arenas' tongue-in-cheek reflection on Nemesia points to the disjunction his text creates between texts that read each other. In this sense, his novel falls very much in line with Derridian critiques of logocentrism, as a contemplation on both how texts relate to each other and slip beyond that relationship. However, the specific juxtaposition of Nemesia—a "blacker" *mulata*—with Cecilia, an "almost-white" *mulata*, suggests an examination of the roles that these two characters play as translators, or vehicles of translation.

As we have seen, the *mulataje* that Cecilia represents is not neutral. Like Homi Bhabha's minic man, who represents the "desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite… almost the same but not white" (Bhabha 126; 30), the Cecilia Valdés of Villaverde's novel represents both her own desire for "whiteness" through marriage to Leonardo and the reading Cuban public's desire for national whiteness, to be read through Cecilia's body. However, Nemesia, also a *mulata*, mirrors Cecilia; like Cecilia, she suffers due to an illicit love interest—first her adopted brother José Dolores, and then Leonardo Gamboa himself. Arenas' discussion of Nemesia's absence from Villaverde's text (and, subsequently, from Arenas') points to the narrative demands of the external socio-political context of the novel as the text's "frame," that which forms the "narrative conventions". This is a demand from which Arenas' narrator, quite self-consciously, refuses to exempt himself. Rather, the narrative voice draws attention to this process, both from the perspective of the author, and from the perspective of the "erased":

Ni siquiera un amor como el suyo… ocupaba un lugar… en la pretenciosa serie de

> capítulos titulados precisamente ***Del Amor***… su amor, protestaba Nemesia, era mucho más grande que el de todos los demás personajes reunidos. ¡Muchísimo más!... Pero ya ella veía cómo el desalmado autor de la obra se le acercaba amenazante… Y toda su pasión, todo su furor, toda su ternura habrán quedado en…" (*La Loma* 45)
>
> [Not even a love like hers took up any space in the pretentious series of chapters titled precisely ***On Love***… her love, protested Nemesia, was much greater than that of all the other characters together. Much greater! But she could already see how the heartless author of the work threateningly came closer…and all her passion, all her rage, all her tenderness will have come to…]

The chapter trails off, representing with its incomplete final sentence that ends in ellipses, that Nemesia's story remains unwritten. However, her "tragedy" of unrequited love, as well as her "darkened" appearance reverse the trajectory that Cecilia Valdés represents, and invite the reader to do precisely what Arenas has done: that is, to fill those parts of the stories that the author leaves unwritten.

Cecilia's "tragedy" points *to* those obstacles to a positivistic national future in the context of Villaverde's novel, while Nemesia's presence, in Arenas' points *out* the directionality of this narrative, while opening the possibility for other options. Rather than solely signaling the "tragedy" of the "blacker" *mulata* who cannot hope to approach Cecilia's position, and thus Villaverde's disinterest in her as a primary character, Nemesia insists on her own protagonism—it simply occurs in another text, one which

Arenas playfully suggests his readers construct. Nemesia cannot point to an idealized future, the way Cecilia can; and yet, in Arenas' novel, Cecilia's future is certainly less desirable as a metaphorized national body than Nemesia's is.

La loma del ángel mocks Cecilia—she is vain, stubborn, indulgent and generally lacks insight and intelligence. Her daughter, born at the end of the novel, is a reproduction of her personality and her physical presence, although perhaps even lighter, the narrator tells us; nonetheless, she inherits Cecilia's foolishness and likely fruitless ambitions as she runs through the streets with her second-generation half-brother Leonardito. However, in Arenas' novel, she is mocked as the textual construction of a social authority whom the narrator refuses to recognize. The chapter of the novel entitled "Cirilo Villaverde" makes clearer the intersections between Villaverde as textual author and the Cuban political authorities of the 1980s—including the official revolutionary authorities—as artistic censors and "authors" of history.

Incorporating both Villaverde as a character and some details of his life, together with his novel *Cecilia Valdés* into the chapter, Arenas parodies authorial attempts to smooth out the contours of history into a logical narrative form. In *La loma del ángel*, Villaverde discovers that in the forty years since the publication of his novel, not a single copy has sold in Cuba due to the almost complete illiteracy of the Cuban public. He decides to return to his homeland, and hiding out in the Sierra Maestra mountains to avoid detection by his political oppressors, he founds a school in order to teach the illiterate children to read, naturally, *Cecilia Valdés*. However, the children refuse to learn, wary of their teacher's intent and uninterested in the only text offered to them. The

description of Cirilo's actions both points to Villaverde as a pro-independence figure in the wars of independence from Spain in the nineteenth century, as well as parodies the well-known origins of Castro's revolutionaries' war against the Batista dictatorship in the mountains, and the narrative the post-revolutionary government drew between those origins and the spectacular rise in literacy rates and general educational reforms in the decades after 1959. Indeed, the near 100% literacy rate is frequently touted both by pro- and anti-Castro camps as one of the revolution's greatest achievements. However, Arenas' sarcastic undertones point to a populace that is ill-positioned to take advantage of any new opportunities. For, according to *La loma del ángel*, like Cirilo's students, the post-revolutionary populace is offered only a singular "text" on which to exercise their interpretive abilities.

The episode ends with Cirilo's flight and possible death—this is left up to the reader—when don Cándido and doña Rosa appear demanding to know the intent behind one of *Cecilia Valdés*' cryptic sentences, an intent that Cirilo refuses to reveal. He tells the visitors that "eso queda para el curioso lector [that is left to the curious reader]" (*La Loma* 124). Just as Cirilo's students refuse to submit to the didacticism of their teacher's novel, the text itself, even in its univocal nature, reveals an incomplete narrative that demands the participation of its readers. Like Cecilia who can never "be quite white," neither the author nor the reader can ever be "quite right". The process of whitening which serves as one of the "lessons" of *Cecilia Valdés* serves in this episode as a textual metaphor that Arenas' text reverses. Like Nemesia's story, which "blackens" Cecilia's,

La loma del ángel comically exaggerates its ruptures with its source text, in order to signal that text's ruptures with its own directions.

In *La loma del ángel*, love and the consummation of love remain unattainable, and yet, as one of the driving forces behind the narrative, are associated with the text's creativity. For Arenas, this creativity is linked both literally and metaphorically with political freedom in post-revolutionary Cuba. If the *mulata* of the nineteenth century represents the violence of colonialism and slavery, the parody of her, at the end of the twentieth, points back at her history and mocks it. Do we follow Cecilia's story or Nemesia's? Arenas offers us a similar ending to Cecilia's tale as Villaverde; confined to the abbey on *La loma del ángel* after Leonardo's death, she can only watch from a window as her daughter repeats her mistakes. But what is left for the curious reader ("queda para el curioso lector")? Arenas' textual games point to everything that is left out of the text, as much as that which is in it. In this way, his novel reflects the process of "disappointment," in reflecting back that which he objects to, and opening the possibility for a new kind of perspective made familiar by the source of its parody.

NAÇÃO CRIOULA

Agualusa's undermining of whitening myths takes a less overtly parodical and more cynical form, not through a "blackened" text, but through recounting the tragic story of Ana Olímpia, a beautiful Angolan ex-slave who escapes to Brazil on the last illegal slaving ship to leave Angola after she is inherited by a cruel master. Like Cecilia, Ana Olímpia is beautiful, and as the well-educated concubine of a wealthy Portuguese master who treats her as his wife, she is never legally freed despite her elevated social

surroundings. Like Cecilia Valdés, Ana Olímpia's existence is mediated through the men with whom she is involved; while her life, for a time, can approximate that of the white women who surround her, as a black woman, she exposes the failures and the dangers of the whitening myth through her frequently precarious situation.

Textually representing this phenomenon, the epistolary novel is narrated by the famous Portuguese heteronym Carlos Fradique Mendes, the adventurer made most recognized by nineteenth-century Portuguese novelist José Maria Eça de Queirós. As a permanent expatriate who travels the world, "corresponding" with Eça and his other literary creations in an epistolary novel (*A correspondência de Fradique Mendes* (1900)) and numerous *crônicas* and journal articles (some collected in the posthumously edited and published *Cartas inéditas de Fradique Mendes e mais páginas esquecidas* (1929)), Fradique at times parodies the uncritical enthusiasm and imitation of anything foreign (especially French) among the Portuguese moneyed classes, and at times approximates Eça's own authorial and socio-political opinions. Eça was a famously cynical critic of what he saw as the backward and small-minded concerns of the Portuguese nation in the nineteenth century, which gets translated in Agualusa's version of Fradique as pointing to an anachronistic and irrelevant former colonial power which struggles to maintain its tenuous hold on its African colonies.

Similarly to Villaverde and Arenas, both Eça de Queirós and José Eduardo Agualusa have lived large portions of their adult lives in exile. For both Eça and Agualusa, Brazil serves as a reference point, both personal and cultural, a source of family history for both authors (each born to a Brazilian father) and a place where both

authors frequently publish their work. Thus the parallels between Eça as an expatriate author and Fradique Mendes as an itinerant adventurer bring to the forefront a dialogic interplay between experience and text. As Fradique tells Eça's narrator in *A correspondência de Fradique Mendes*, he is more interested in traveling the world than reading or writing about it: "Tenho folheado e lido atentamente o Mundo como um livro cheio de idéias [I have paged through and attentively read the World like a book full of ideas][23]" (Eça de Queirós 77); it is Eça, naturally, who collects Fradique's experiences and both interprets and organizes them for the reader, as Fradique repeatedly refuses to write a book himself. Indeed, the very episodes that *Nação crioula* narrates, Fradique's travels to Southern Africa, are experiences that Eça's Fradique refuses to comment upon to the narrators. Agualusa's novel uses the "secret" correspondence of the character, therefore, as a mode of commentary upon Portugal's imperial history—a point of consistency with the Portuguese novelist's incarnation of the character—as well as a way to comment upon how that history has been written over the twentieth century, from a post-independence and trans-cultural vantage point. Agualusa's version of Fradique subtly ironizes the "Portuguese exception"—that is, the "special case" of the Portuguese colonizer as especially effective at "integrating" with the colonized populations producing a "gentler colonization" theorized by Gilberto Freyre. As Eça's narrator assures the readers, Fradique "Nunca visitou países à maneira do detestável *touriste*

[23] The English translations of Eça's texts that appear in this dissertation are my own. *A correspondência de Fradique Mendes*, to the best of my knowledge, has only recently been translated into English. A small selection from the novel first appeared in 1906, translated by Edgar Prestage and published by Sherratt and Hughes. The complete translation of the novel by Gregory Rabassa carries a publication date of 2010 by the U. of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, but also was unavailable at the time this dissertation was written, as the publisher was still listing the title as "forthcoming".

francês, para notar de alto e pecamente <<os defeitos>>—isto é, as divergências desse tipo de civilização mediano e genérico de onde saía e que preferia [Never visited countries in the manner of the detestable French tourist, peckishly noting 'defects' from on high—that is, the divergences from that type of mediocre and generic civilization from which he departed and which he preferred]" (77). The tongue-in-cheek opposition that Eça creates between the Fradique and the "tourist" is doubled again in an opposition between Fradique as colonizer and his lover, the *assimilada*[24] ex-slave, Ana Olímpia.

Eça de Queirós and Villaverde's shared concern for the direction of the nation serves as the subtext to Arenas' and Agualusa's ironic derailing of nationalistic trajectories that would "solve" the problems of post-revolutionary nationhood. Agualusa, like Arenas, takes on the mythology of the *mulata* as a nationalistic symbol of racial harmony and progress. However, Agualua's triangulation of Angola-Portugal-Brazil uses notions of creolized utopia as a countercurrent to the polarity of colonial rule. It thus critically dismantles the polarity of metropolis-colony and its accompanying binaries of Old World decadence vs. New World vitality (and vice-versa), European history vs. the colonial absence of history, or "writing the colony" vs. "writing back" to the center. While these are important theoretical developments in the history of post-colonial studies, they are also configurations whose limits are signaled in recent works such as *Nação*

[24] "Assimilado" is the legal term given to certain African subjects by the Portuguese colonial government that recognizes their privileged legal position and elevated social status, due to adopting "European customs," using metropolitan Portuguese language, and practicing the Catholic faith. It granted those who attained the status special access to government positions and privileged treatment, but was an official designation that only around 2% of the Angolan population had attained when colonial rule ended in 1975. See David Birmingham, Empire in Africa: Angola and Its Neighbors (Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 2006). 76-77.

crioula, as well as by those critics who object to Agualusa's defense of *crioulidade* as an untenable position in the Angolan context.

Fradique's letters in *Nação crioula* encompass the period from his first arrival in Luanda in 1868 until 1888, the year of his death, and is followed in the novel by a single letter from Ana Olímpia to Eça de Queirós dated August of 1900, the very month and year of Eça's own death. The novel narrates Ana Olímpia's peregrinations and transformations as much as Fradique's. When Fradique first meets Ana Olímpia, she seems to be leading the comfortable life of a wealthy *assimilada*; born to a Congolese king who is killed in captivity, she is rescued as a girl from slavery by her eventual Portuguese husband and brought up among the social elite of Luanda. Well-educated and beautiful, she is adored by her white owner who acts as her husband, and is a central figure in the social circles of the Luandan bourgeoisie, running a literary salon and hosting social engagements. After her owner dies and it is discovered that she had been legally still his property and thus has been passed on as an inheritance to his cruel relative, Ana Olímpia is imprisoned once again as a slave until Fradique rescues her, and with the help of Arcénio de Carpo, an illegal slave trader, is smuggled aboard the slaving vessel the "Nação crioula" as it clandestinely departs for Brazil. Free upon their arrival, Fradique and Ana Olímpia marry and have a daughter; forced to acknowledge the horrors of the plantation slavery that thrives in an independent Brazil, Fradique buys a plantation only to set its slaves free, and Ana Olímpia becomes an abolitionist activist. Upon Fradique's sudden death in 1888, Ana Olímpia and her daughter, Sofia, return to Angola, and continue her abolitionist work. The novel ends with her letter to Eça, in which she

narrates her life story in first person and includes copies of his letters to her over the twenty years they were together; the date of the letter, however suggests that it is only their unfortunate coincidence with Eça's death that left them out of the compilations that are published under the Portuguese novelist's authorship.

Beyond simply narrating a "lost" episode of the adventurer through the "secret" correspondence that remained buried for almost a century, Agualusa's novel introduces aspects to Fradique's character that contrast with his irreverent "dandyism," particularly concerning his growing politicization and opposition to slavery. While certainly representing concerns of the late nineteenth-century setting, this aspect of the novel also serves to bridge the temporal gap between the late nineteenth century and the end of the twentieth. Agualusa, like Arenas, associates slavery and the colonial condition, linking political discussions of abolition to notions of decolonization that become salient metaphors when read in the context of the 1990s, the decade of the novel's publication, as a decade of Angolan transition.

Fradique, upon his arrival in Luanda, appears to be the recognizable literary type of the roving adventurer who sets about exploring the outer reaches of his European *pátria*'s overseas territories. As he steps onto Angolan soil, his first impressions recorded in his first letter home draw his godmother Madame de Jouarre's attention to a sense of "hav[er] deixado para trás o próprio mundo [having left the real world behind me]" (Agualusa 9; 3). Instead, he finds in Luanda, beyond the smell of tropical fruits and sugarcane, "um outro odor, mais subtil, melancólico, como um corpo em decomposição. É este cheiro, creio, que todos os viajantes se referem quando falam de África [another

smell, something subtler, more melancholy, not unlike the smell of death and decay. I think this is the smell that travelers refer to when they speak of Africa]" (9; 3). As Fradique's Scottish servant vomits to the side, Fradique sardonically tells him, "Bem vindo a Portugal! [Welcome to Portugal]!" (9; 3).

The ironic ambiguity of this opening scene introduces the way that Agualusa plays with Eça's own rendering of Fradique as a humoristic vehicle who provides a worldly critique of Portugal as the center of a fading colonial empire. What, exactly, is "decomposing"? Rather than duplicating the disdain of the belittled "French tourist" for the culture (or lack thereof) of the colonies, Fradique points out the incongruity between the African setting and the idea of an "overseas Portugal". In his first letter to Madame Jouarre in Eça's *A correspondência de Fradique Mendes*, Fradique, complaining of a failed construction project on his Portuguese land, remarks of his crooked contractor that "tudo tende à ruína num país de ruínas… é com estes elementos alegres, que nós procuramos restaurar o nosso império de África! [Everything tends to ruin in a country of ruins… it is with these happy elements that we're seeking to restore our African empire!]" (121). The duplicated sense of a Portuguese colonial project in "ruins" both in Europe and in Africa points to the question of whether, Fradique and his relationship with Ana Olímpia indeed point to the "restoration" of the empire, or whether his very comments ironize such a possibility. The interplay of this question with Fradique's travels to Brazil as well as between Europe and Africa places the debate among not only the question of the Portuguese empire, but also the question of the Brazilian "racial democracy" as a national model for Angola. For, if the Portuguese empire is already cast

as "decaying" in the nineteenth century, the implication for the novels' late twentieth-century context suggests that Angola has not yet extracted itself from this colonial triangulation.

The question of slavery is tied into Fradique's portrayal of the decaying empire, as well as to the questions of a national future that he sees reflected in the new nation of Brazil. Although he arrives in Angola in 1868, eighteen years after the official end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade from Angola to Brazil in 1850, Fradique discovers that illegal slaving is still sufficiently profitable that it continues despite the risks of apprehension. His impressions of the "empire in ruins" are reinforced thorough one of the first figures with whom he makes contact in Luanda, the slave trader "Coronel" Arcénio de Carpo, who serves as a caricature of the colonial presence in Angola. Arcénio's title as Coronel of the provinces of Bié, Bailundo and Embo—three interior provinces far from the capital and major port cities—"não tem no entanto significado algum para além do honorífico, já que Arcénio de Carpo não é militar, nunca visitou nenhuma destas províncias, que alias não prestam vassalagem ao governo português, e em nenhuma delas existe sequer um corpo de soldados." ["has no actual meaning… as Arcénio de Carpo is no military man, nor has he ever visited those provinces—provinces which in fact have no allegiance to the Portuguese government and—incidentally—none of which houses so much as a single regiment]" (Agualusa 10; 4). That is, Portugal's colonizing mission is ironically represented in a military commander who has neither control nor recognition in the region he purports to govern, and has secured his title in order to capture, ship and sell illegal human capital on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Arcénio has made himself

rich and gained extensive influence as a slave trader who justifies his business as "supporting the economic growth of Brazil", the most profitable of Portugal's former colonies. His trade, therefore, he argues, promotes economic growth in a place where there are insufficient numbers of Europeans to work the land. In fact, his trade likely does not support the Portuguese state (at least directly) since the trans-Atlantic slave trade between the Portuguese African colonies was officially outlawed in 1850, and any further slaving ships that made it to Brazil after this time were likely not recorded by official sources (Graden 277). This notion of a creolized Brazil where black and *mulato* populations outnumber the white Europeans is an image of Brazil which Fradique once again evokes ironically in his comments at the end of this first letter that he and Arcénio are the only two "Portugueses como antigamente [Portuguese of yesteryear]" (12; 7) left in Angola—ironic because of Fradique's growing support of the abolition movement—, who contrast with the new Creole, mixed population which represents the future of the colonies and the future of Angola.

Fradique's first contact with Ana Olímpia leads to his decades-long entanglement with colonial politics and the abolitionist movements in Brazil and Angola, and from this first moment of acquaintance, his interactions with her drive his travels among the points of the Europe-Angola-Brazil triangle, as well as the narration of the novel, forward. After observing the decaying Portuguese presence in Angola which prop up an abusive social caste system with slaves at the bottom, Fradique is introduced to "a mulher mais bela do mundo [the most beautiful woman in the world]" (21; 15), and all of a sudden, his cynical outlook falls away and "logo naquele momento me reconciliei com a humanidade e os

meus olhos se abriram com outro interesse para este país e as suas gentes [at that very moment, I was reconciled to humanity and my eyes opened with a new interest in this country and its peoples]" (21; 15). After recounting the meeting to his godmother, Fradique signs his letter as "seu afilhado quase africano [your almost-African godson]" (22; 17). Ana Olímpia's "Africanizing" effect on Fradique reverses the process of *embranqueamento,* whitening, or *assimilação,* assimilation, that stereotypically define a relationship between white Europeans and black or *mulata* women in nineteenth-century Lusophone letters, similarly to Arenas' "blackening" process that ridicules national whitening.

And yet, while the commentary of the novel depends on the reader drawing a connection between the antiquated colonial governance from the nineteenth century to the twentieth, the primary question of the novel does not concern solely the 1975 decolonization from Portugal, but looks more critically at the post-colonial proposals for community that circulate in the Lusophone Atlantic. The notion of racial *mestiçagem* as a reinvigorating or revitalizing result of colonial contact is part of the nineteenth-century Lusophone imaginary, just as it is in the Spanish Caribbean. Even before Gilberto Freyre's notion of racial democracy, many Brazilian novels provide idealized formulas of racial mixing between an African-descended or indigenous woman and a European man. One example, Aluísio Azevedo's *O cortiço* (1890), introduces the prototypical *mulata* Rita Baiana, a woman whom the Portuguese Dom Jerónimo is unable to resist, and for whom he abandons his stoic and stolid white wife. Fradique and Ana Olímpia's relationship, therefore, is partially a repetition of the colonial cliché of white European

father, black African mother, and their eventual *mulata* daughter, the representation of the new *pátria* that she embodies, and for whose birth Ana Olímpia serves as the "creole vessel".

It was Freyre, however, who recasts the notion of *mestiçagem* as the defining factor of Brazilian national identity, and whose work has a lasting influence on notions of trans-national Lusophone identity. The image of the "Creole nation" as the metaphorical vessel that travels between the African colony and the "Creole future" in Brazil is one that has a long history in Luso-Brazilian letters, evoked ironically in *Nação Crioula*. Freyre, one of the first social scientists to write about the importance of the African and indigenous cultures in Brazilian national culture, develops the idea of "lusotropicologia," a term he coins by picking up the European discourse of "tropicalism" as the primitive, uncivilized, backwards and heathen effects of the tropics on its natives. Freyre instead posits in "lusotropicalism" both the ideal of miscegenation realized through Portuguese policy and practice, and the cultural products that reflect this *mestiçagem* that necessarily takes place as a result of Portuguese presence in Africa, Asia and the Americas. Freyre puts forward in his seminal work *Casa-Grande e Senzala*, [*The Masters and the Slaves*] in fact that "A singular disposição do português para a coloização híbrida e escravocrata dos trópicos explica-a em grande parte o seu passado étnico, ou antes, cultural, de povo indefinido entre a Europa e a África... a influência africana fervendo sob a europeia [The singular predisposition of the Portuguese to the hybrid, slave-exploiting colonization of the tropics, is to be explained in large part by the ethnic, or better, the cultural past, of a people existing indeterminately between Europe and Africa… the African influence

seething beneath the European]" (5; 4). For Freyre, this "hybrid" and "indeterminate" past produces a harmonious and idealized Brazilian culture where the perfect *Creole* mixture of European, African and Indigenous elements improves and perfects the Brazilian people[25]. Fradique's idealization of this notion, reproduced in his own relationship, puts into question the desirability of this model as an imported notion of nationalism when Ana Olímpia returns to Angola after his death with her *mulata* daughter Sophia.

The term '*crioulo*' or 'Creole' in the Portuguese context is essential to the narrative development of the novel, and it differs in its definition from the way the term is used in other colonial contexts. While the Portuguese colonies of Cape Verde and São Tomé e Príncipe aligned with the commonly understood notion of Creole societies as composed predominantly of a population that results from racial and linguistic *mestiçagem* [mixing] as a result of the slave trade, in the Brazilian and Angolan contexts the term also referred to the children of slaves born into slavery (as opposed to those captured in Africa and sold to slave owners). That is, a *crioulo* can also be a black person who "belongs" to a European owner. Foreshadowing the notion of the *assimilado*, in Angola, "crioulos" could be any "native African" who demonstrated the values through the "symbiosis" of his or her indigenous African cultures with Portuguese culture (Andrade 23). The language Mário Pinto de Andrade uses reflects the Portuguese government's language through the end of the colonial period in the 20th century

[25] For further discussion of Freyre's theorizing of racial mixing, see Arroyo, *Travestismos culturales*, and Joshua Lund and Malcolm McNee, ed., *Gilberto Freyre E Os Estudos Latino-Americanos*. Pittsburgh: Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana, 2006.

promoting an ideology of "assimilationism"—that is, requiring the African colonial subject to submit culturally, linguistically and ideologically to the colonizer. For Pinto de Andrade, therefore, ideas of *creolidade* are inseparable from colonial domination, both militarily and epistemologically. The result of this *creolidade*, as Ana Olímpia demonstrates, is the complete assumption of a Europeanized cultural matrix, but one that Inocência Mata points out is a sort of distorted European influence (Mata *Literatura Angolana* 50). Ana Olímpia's character will reveal, as the text continues, the performativity of her European education that in turn justifies her defense of her fellow slaves in her abolitionist activism and her Quimbundu cultural background as she is translated through Fradique's letters.

The theoretical links between post-colonial nationhood and the abolition of slavery have long been established in studies of nineteenth-century North American, Caribbean and Latin American literary traditions. Critic Pedro Miguel Reboredo Marques notes the problematic place for Eça's corpus in the nation-building cultural narrative of Portugal, precisely because his sharp social criticism in his novels refuses to acknowledge either a "national mythology" or a "collective destiny" for Portugal (88). This outlook results in a kind of "soft imperialism" transmitted through Eça's Fradique, that focuses its criticism on Portugal as an ineffective colonial metropole "in ruins," rather than an ideological objection to the colonial project. In this way, the nation-in-process that Marques reads in Eça's work converses with the national crises brought about by the Carnation Revolution in 1974 that ended the dictatorship in Portugal, made official the decolonization of the last Portuguese African and Asian colonies, and sparked

the first post-independence generation of "national" literature in Angolan letters, questioned by Agualusa's generation influenced by the disappointment resulting from almost thirty years of civil war.

The "identitary crisis" of Portugal since the final dissolution of its empire in 1974 that Isabel Pires de Lima defines as one of "turning back into Europeans" is one that recalls the crisis of nineteenth-century nationalisms contemplated by Eça's Generation of 1870, as well as Boaventura de Sousa Santos' notion of Portugal on the "periphery" of Europe, and yet one that Agualusa's version of Fradique Mendes disrupts from his first embarkation in Angola. Lima argues that since 1974, "de um país multiracial e multicontinental, de povo em diáspora, eis-nos {Portugal} tornados, ou retornados, Europa [from a multi-racial and multi-continental country, from a people in diaspora, we {Portugal} have turned into, or re-turned into, Europe]" ("Em Busca De Uma Nova Pátria" 130). That is, she opposes the "re-Europization" (and by extension, the de-Europization of the colonies) of the former colonial center to the colonial narrative of the harmonious "creole" empire, which had as its organizing principle the "benign" colonizing policies of the Portuguese metropolis, a mythology of colonial citizens and emphasized the cultural and racial mixing that was part of the civilizing project. This is a narrative that continually resurfaces through what Lima calls the "dual pathologies" of Iberism and nationalism in Portugal, two "pathologies" which she sees reflected in the messianism of criolist neo-realist literature of early Angolan independence (133).

This reorientation of Portuguese literary nationalism coincides with, similarly to other post-independence literary movements in Africa, Angola's development of a

national literary corpus whose formation is allied to national liberation and national consciousness. It is in the years after independence and during the continuing civil war of the 1980s and 1990s, however, that the euphoric and celebratory language used to evoke the future of the Angolan nation gives way to a "demythologizing" language that "cannibalizes" the originary national mythology (Mata *Literatura Angolana* 83-84), rewriting it with a sharply ironic vision of the possibility of the idealized nation to materialize. In this way, the generations of Angolan authors at the end of the twentieth century, including Agualusa, call to mind a similar process of de-mythification and ironic criticism that Fradique provides in Eça de Queirós' work. Agualusa's novel references two important tendencies of Eça de Queirós' work. First, taking up Eça's proclivity to parody the "decaying" and perhaps useless social and political institutions of his era (Reis 140), Agualusa, rewriting the character in the context of Angola's precarious national project, calls to mind the decaying the Portuguese empire at the time of Brazilian independence in 1822 that nonetheless holds on to its African territories for another century and a half. Second, Agualusa's novel suggests the inclination of Eça's literary corpus to present literary discourse as, additionally, a form of historiographic discourse as well (Reis 104). Thus Agualusa's taking up of Eça's character references not only the social criticism Fradique's voice presents in Eça's work, but additionally inserts itself into the historical narratives that are taken apart by the Angolan literary works of the 1980s and 1990s.

Fradique's support of abolition in Angola and Brazil in *Nação crioula* derails his previous existence of a globetrotting dandy, forcing an engagement with the politics of

empire that is not in evidence in Eça's work. Ana Olímpia is educated in the European political, philosophical and literary trends of her time, but, notes Fradique, "estuda com idêntico interesse o passado do seu própio povo, recolhe lendas e provérbios de variadas nações de Angola, e prepara mesmo um dicionário de português-quimbundu [shows just as much interest studying the past of her own people, she collects legends and proverbs from various Angolan tribes, and is even putting together a Portuguese-Quimbundu dictionary]" (37; 29). That is, Ana Olímpia is the exemplary Creole- born in Angola, she leads a salon in Luanda where "brancos, negros e baços, [são] todos unidos no mesmo amor por Angola [whites, blacks and half-castes [are] all united in their love for Angola]" (37; 29), representing not only in her intellectual activities but in her social peers the idealized notion of racial harmony and lack of racially-driven social classes that underlay nineteenth and twentieth-century ideologies of the Portuguese colonial system.

The "Creole" vessel that carries Ana Olímpia to the young nation of Brazil links the narrative of the declining Portuguese empire to the Creole-national future of the ex-colonies. After their arrival in Brazil, Fradique buys a plantation, frees the slaves, reemploying them as paid workers, and together with Ana Olímpia, joins an underground abolitionist organization. He sees Ana Olímpia as the valuable "first-person narrative" of the slave experience who gives both its goals and its means force and legitimacy. He writes to Eça,

> Todos os discursos de todos os abolicionistas europeus não valem um testemunho como este. E sabe porquê? Porque naquilo que Ana Olímpia diz brilha a luz esplêndida da verdade, enquanto que na boco dos nossos bem intencionados

filántropos arde apenas a frágil lamparinha da retórica. (120)

[All the speeches of all the abolitionists in all Europe are not worth as much as testimony like hers. And do you know why? Because the splendid light of truth shines in everything Ana Olímpia says, while in the mouths of our well-meaning philanthropists nothing burns but the dim lamp of rhetoric]. (108)

Ana Olímpia serves, in Fradique's universe, as the "mouthpiece" of the slave experience, a vision not entirely flattering in its evocation of a certain kind of ventriloquism for Fradique's enlightened social interests. Ana Olímpia, in this context, represents the embodiment of the Creole nation: she herself occupies the space between Portugal and Angola in her family history, her marriage and her relationship with Fradique, with whom she has a daughter. She "crosses" over from slave to socialite, and from slave-owner back to slave. She crosses the ocean from Angola to Brazil, symbolically occupying the space of the "Creole Nation" on its way to the new world, where her story serves as the legitimizing testimony that will allow the fulfillment of the new racial paradise in Brazil, and it is assumed, eventually in Angola.

She is the body and the mouthpiece of an imagined ideal, who, after Fradique's death crosses the Atlantic again to return to Angola to establish a "Creole nation" once again in her homeland. Her body and her testimony, however, are always the "vessels" of Fradique's interests, conforming to a narrative structure of the colonizer's encounter with the colony in which the author, always speaking to other metropolitan citizens, leaves home, runs into difficulty, and emerges triumphant, all the while representing the

Africans whom he encounters as mere background to the narrative. The fact that Ana Olímpia drives Fradique's travels between Brazil and Angola, while presenting somewhat of a variation on this pattern, nonetheless relies on the colonizer's journeys as the motivating factor that compels Ana Olímpia to leave home and to return to a downtrodden Angola with a new Brazilian Creole identity after Fradique's death. She represents all three spaces- Brazil, Angola and Portugal (Lima "Eça Hoje" 145), as well as each of the members of the slave economy- the colonial, the abolitionist, the free African, the slave and the emancipator. When she returns to Angola, she marries the son of Arcénio, completing her tour of the Atlantic slave trade and delaying the hope of an Angolan Creole nation evoked in the liberation of human property and the bright future of Brazil.

Estevão Pinto claims that Freyre's vision of lusotropicologia suggests a Portuguese-ruled Africa that begins to lose its sense of being the fearfully unknown, "becoming a normal part of the world and of humanity" (256). Freyre's problematic notion of the benefits both of the Portuguese approach to colonialism as well as the positive results of the Portuguese sexual encounters with the indigenous populations of its colonies has its reverberations in Fradique's reflections of the Portuguese state towards the end of his life. In one of his final letters, he writes to Eça de Queirós that none of Portugal's colonial projects have been successful in the sense of conquering its colonies militarily, culturally or epistemologically. He asks Eça

> O que é que nós colonizamos? O Brasil, dir-me-ás tu. Nem isso… Brasil colonizou-se a si própio. Ao longo de quarto demorados séculos construímos um

> império... mas infelizmente imaginário... Para construir uma África portuguesa seria necessário que Portugal se fizesse africano... Portugal, território pequeno e nessa altura já quase despovoado, poderia então, sem prejuízo, ser governado por um qualquer empacaceiro em comissão de serviço. (131)
>
> [what is it exactly that we have colonized? Brazil… not even that. Brazil colonized itself. We spent four long centuries building up an empire… but unfortunately an imaginary one… Constructing a Portuguese Africa would require no less than Portugal herself becoming African… and then Portugal, as a small and by-and-large depopulated territory, could then be governed by some *empacaceiro* on a temporary secondment]. (123)

This critically sarcastic proposition that the colonial center is actually in Africa turns the notion of a "Creole" utopia upside down, suggesting in a critical revision of the politics of the Portuguese empire the absurdity of conceiving of a Portuguese nationality in Angola. Fradique's proposition that the metropolis would be governed by a native Angolan foot-soldier, relegated to the far periphery of a new African nation, is epistemologically impossible in the context of the end of the nineteenth century, and an ironic poke at the reader of Agualusa's novel, who knows both the duration of the Portuguese presence in Angola as well as the disappointment with an idealized discourse of a national future that develops amidst the turmoil of the civil war in the 1980s and 1990s. His journey, in fact, represents a reversal of Freyre's: while Freyre moves from Brazil to Portugal to the African colonies, Fradique begins at the colonial center, moves

through the colonies to arrive at an idealized national future in Brazil. The newfound "racial knowledge" which he and Ana Olímpia acquire through this voyage, also doubles the Middle Passage in a sanitized way, producing a creolized reflection of Paul Gilroy's "double consciousness" born from the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

By sarcastically proposing the absolute inversion of the empire, Fradique carries Freyre's proposal of the African "underlayer" to Portuguese culture to the extreme, showing what it would be like to shake off the mask of European hegemony and "Africanize" Portugal sexually, culturally and geographically. He, like the historical figure of Eça, radically undermines the traditional monolithic notions of European nationalism by pushing Portugal discursively and geographically to the periphery of its own empire. He does not posit so much that the colonies should break off and become their own national reflections of a the European nation as a model, but rather that if the "Creole nation" is realized, which for Fradique Brazil exemplifies, the periphery turns into *a* center that relates to other former peripheries through parallel processes of cultural production, and the former center falls away. The hope of the "Creole nation" has the potential to invert the dynamics of colonial power, but is one dislocated from the reality of Angola once the slave trade ends and many of the Portuguese colonists abandon Angola. Fradique maintains his hope placed in the "Creole nation," never returning to Angola, whereas Ana Olímpia's less-than-triumphant return after long enough in Brazil that she is known as "The Brazilian" once back in Angola points to the limits of the Creole utopia in the realities of contemporary Angola.

Is the space that Fradique and Ana Olímpia occupy together the lusophone world created by the Portuguese, and made possible and visible not by national or imperial divisions, but by the Portuguese language and luso way of life? The novel's surface answer might be affirmative, but not with the utopian vision of a perfect synthesis suggested by Freyre and Fradique, and created in Fradique's image of Ana Olímpia. The novel draws attention to the problematic proposal of Fradique as the white colonial savior who rescues his black African lover from slavery, takes her to a paradisiacal space where he seduces and cares for her, and then abandons her to return to his homeland. This can perhaps serve as a metaphorical narration of the colonial enterprise itself, complicating the straightforward narrative proposal of the Creole utopia. Thus, the narrative trajectory of Ana Olímpia's relationship with Fradique—the benevolent colonizer delivers the poor African woman from bondage—is one that puts into question two important aspects of Fradique's epistolary narrative.

First, the narrative frame driven by Fradique's quest to abolish slavery as a condition for the foundation of the "Creole nation" is legitimized by its alliance to the truly "authentic Creole" character of Ana Olímpia and the birth of her mixed-race child. The second aspect questioned here is the narrative trajectory of Ana Olímpia's conversion to abolitionist: even after her owner's death at the beginning of the novel, she defends maintaining her "house slaves" on the grounds that they are like family, and that they and she are interdependent for their survival. It is only when she is returned to slavery herself and subsequently absconded away to be liberated in Brazil that she converts. In this way, her narrative creates a similar "national mythology" to Freyre's

configuration: legitimizing Portuguese colonization and slavery as a means through which "racial mixing" can occur, slavery is a stage on the way to the ideal *creolidade* which must be the foundation of the new nation, and one that is defended both by the white slave owners as well as by black and *crioulo* ones. Ana Olimpia's position, when read in the context of the post-1975 independence period, anticipates the configuration of an African bourgeoisie that reproduces the stratifying social mechanisms of colonial society theorized in Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* and further criticized in Mbembe's *On the Postcolony*.

This new Creole nation that both Fradique and Ana Olímpia imagine is one in which Fradique has no place. He "passes through" both Angola and Brazil, both enabling the freeing of slaves—Ana Olímpia and those on his plantation—and articulating the absurdity of the Portuguese empire as such. However, as occupying the position and the function of the colonial enterprise, Fradique makes himself obsolete. In this sense, Agualusa's creation of him redoubles what Carlos Alberto Pasero suggests is one of the primary functions of Eça's version of the character: the target of a "sátira extensible a su clase [a satire extendible to his class]" (Pasero 41-42). If Ana Olímpia embodies the Creole utopia once she gets to Brazil, further legitimized through her daughter with Fradique, this utopia disappears once she returns to Angola, just as Fradique's return to Portugal and eventual death motivates her return. Fradique, by his association with his black African paramour, makes the Creole nation possible. His disappearance at the end and Ana Olímpia return to Luanda on her own suggest the necessity for a space in Angola

released from the colonial "enabler," where the difficult reality demands a negotiation of the Angolan nation on new, yet undefined terms.

In its deliberate use of a literary figure created by the anti-nationalistic Eça de Queirós who, in Agualusa's version, promotes the inversion of the Portuguese imperial system such that the center effectively ceases to exist, the text opens up a space for Angolan national identity to be debated in all its complexities and complications without a synthetic national utopia looming on the horizon. Agualusa is part of the generation of Angolan authors who begins to publish as the first generations of "authors of the Angolan nation" begin to express disillusionment and disappointment after the "nation of creoles" envisioned by the early nationalist leaders fails to materialize, and the country continues in civil unrest. In destabilizing the narrative of the Portuguese colonial project through the "passage" of abolition culminating in independent nations in the image of the European center, Agualusa suggests an entity that comes of age on its own terms, and adapts its system to its own problems. While Angola may indeed have been part of the "world that the Portuguese created," Portugal might just as well be "the world that Angola created".

In a 2006 interview, Agualusa argues in discussing the contemporary parallels between Brazil and Angola, that both countries begin the twenty-first century in a process of decolonization. For Agualusa, the residual effects of the colonial slaving economy in both Brazil and Angola undercut naïve configurations of national racial democracy, or the idea that political independence in either place has brought about the social representations of that independence for Brazilians and Angolans. These assertions make

the relevance of an historical novel that takes place during the convergence of a declining Portuguese empire, a rising Brazilian nation, a growing Angolan independence movement and the increasing power of the abolitionists driving these political changes particularly relevant to late-twentieth century commentary. Agualusa uses the term "decolonization," he says, because "O Brasil ainda é um país moldado na escravatura, igual à África [Brazil is still a country formed through slavery, the same as Africa]" (Giron). Echoing, perhaps deliberately, the post-1975 link between world socialist solidarity and African decolonization, the author continues to describe the post- socialist era as a new phase of decolonization:

> vivemos um resquício do antigo regime comunista (1975-1992), durante o qual até as barbearias foram estatizadas e os melhores músicos simplesmente fuzilados. Em Luanda, você encontra ainda ruas com nome de dirigentes comunistas e até hoje funciona o Cine Karl Marx. Por preguiça, as pessoas não querem mudar nem os símbolos nacionais, embora exista uma nova bandeira já definida. Angola foi descolonizada recentemente. Saiu de uma guerra terrível entre comunistas apoiados por Moscou e maoístas financiados pelos Estados Unidos. (Giron)

> [We are living with the vestiges of the old Communist regime (1975-1992), during which even the barber shops were nationalized and the best musicians were shot. In Luanda, you still find streets with the names of communist leaders and the Karl Marx Theater continues to operate. Out of laziness, people don't

want to change our national symbols, although a new flag has been selected. Angola was recently decolonized. It has come out of a terrible war between Communists supported by Moscow and Maoists financed by the United States]. This type of openly political criticism, equating the socialist revolutionary regime to a continuance of the colonial system is rare among Angolan intellectuals, and yet serves to place Agualusa's work more clearly in conversation with Arenas'. Like *La loma del ángel*, Agualusa's novel rescripts an historical past that is employed in the present as a political tool, and exposes that contemporary political narrative that is complicit, in the context of the novels, in the exploitive systems that they have overthrown.

In *Nação crioula*, part of that narrative concerns not only looking to the Brazilian national model during the years of resistance leading up to 1975, but also the silences about the absolute upheaval of the war years—a topic that is broached in Agualusa's 2002 novel *O ano em que Zumbi tomou o Rio* [*The Year that Zumbi Took Rio*], protagonized by an Angolan gang lord who takes over a Rio slum, and 2004's *O vendedor de passados* [*The Book of Chameleons*][26], which deals with the process of personal and national reconstruction after the utter social fragmentation of Angolan communities during and after the war. In this context, deploying Fradique as a participant in a utopian whitening project carries with it a certain irony, even if, as Thomas O. Beebee notes, Fradique and Ana Olímpia's relationship "reinforces the ideological and affective alliance of the Portuguese and the African. The couple's creole daughter, Sofia, as her name implies, represents a new, convergent 'wisdom' arising from the racial and

[26] The title in Portuguese would translate literally in English to *The Seller of Pasts*.

cultural hybridity expressed in their love affair" (202). Indeed, reflecting the Brazilian national narrative, a similarly conservative strain of Angolan thought seeks to draw a direct link between nineteenth-century "crioulidade" and post-independence Angolan nationalisms (Kandjimbo "Angolanidade: O Conceito E O Pressuposto"), a trajectory to which critic Luís Kandjimbo rejects as too simplistic and apolitical as it does not take into account the effects of the prolonged years of clandestine operations against the Portuguese.

Therefore, in what does this "racial wisdom" which Sofia represents consist? While Ana Olímpia may "shine with the light of truth" after she begins to work as an abolitionist, while still a member of the comfortable Luandan bourgeoisie, she herself is a slave owner who refuses to liberate her own house-slaves because it would be like letting her whole family go, and does not see the irony of this situation until Fradique buys and liberates his own slaves. Her evocation of the nineteenth-century "family" with the owners as protectors and the slaves as beloved children is complicated by Ana Olímpia's seeming ignorance of the hypocrisy of assuming this position when she herself, born of enslaved parents, suffers under the same system. Ana Olímpia also, therefore, disrupts the master narrative of either the benevolent colonizer who sees the light (Fradique) or the long-suffering and tragic *crioula* who is either liberated or broken by this system.

Ana Olímpia's transformation from slave to slave owner to abolitionist through movement to Brazil and back to Angola implies a horizontal penetration of ideas that does not deny the devastating effect of the colonial centre, but neither gives it absolute narrative power over her life. As Beebee notes, this deemphasizing of the narrative voice

in an epistolary novel gives the illusion of a multiplicity of perspective, even in the correspondence of one character, as the voice and register are adapted to the interlocutor. In Agualusa's novel, this perspective is further multiplied by Ana Olímpia's letter to Eça de Queirós, in which she agrees with the Portuguese author's decision to publish Fradique's letters, because "podem ser lidas como os capítulos de um inesgotável romance, ou de vários romances, e, nessa perspectiva, são pertença da humanidade [can be read as chapters of an inexhaustible novel, or of several novels, and in that sense they belong to humanity itself]" (136; 30). Agualusa signals here the game in which both he and Eça participate: that of obscuring their role as authors in order to give the illusion of the "many novels" among which the reader chooses. However, Ana Olímpia gives the game another turn when, embarking upon her life story, tells Eça that what she will narrate is not her own story but her story according to Fradique (136; 130). If we read this process of narration as a metaphor for the historiographical process that takes place in Angola after 1975, the novel suggests a decentering of the notion of the equivalence of independence, decolonization and post-colony. This last aspect of Ana Olímpia's letter serves as a point of contact that Nemesia's "unwritten" text suggests in *La loma del ángel*. If Ana Olímpia represents an ambiguous position in the middle of the Atlantic triangle, neither embracing nor condemning her position, Nemesia also points to a certain ambiguity in her position as a silenced *mulata* character. In the triangulation of black Cuba, white Cuba and exiled Cuba, her position is unclear, as we do not have her text in front of us, and thus her "love" that is unwritten could easily point to an allegorical "love" for the post-revolutionary rhetoric that re-Africanized Cuba.

CONCLUSIONS

In both *La loma del angel* and *Nação crioula*, ironic renderings of historical narratives—overt parody in Arenas' novel and transtextuality in Agualusa's—serve as vehicles for critical commentary upon post-revolutionary national narratives in Cuba and Angola. Notions of whitening are central to both novels, as much as metaphors for the racial and social histories of the places they describe, as well as for the ways that whitening and narrative trajectories of national independence are inextricably linked in both the Hispanophone and Lusophone colonies.

Why whitening? Racial mixing as an ideology carries with it the extension of notions of family—the *crioulo*/ *mulato* as offspring—to the notion of nation. On a metaphorical level, the *crioula* or *mulata is* the national body, which harmoniously displays the *rasgos* of each of his parents. This positivistic trajectory which is both part of the Portuguese colonial mythology as well as its former colonies national mythologies also serves as the underpinnings of a long "family" of theorizing texts on the *mulataje* in the Spanish Caribbean. Both Agualusa and Arenas see the implications of a kind of mirroring of the totalizing narrative capacity of such notions as reflected in the discourses that are adopted on a national level in both Cuba and Angola after their respective revolutions. Their works contribute to a "poetics of disappointment" through their rejection of these narratives as adequate tools to counteract the damage that antiquated attempts to resolve colonial/ racial violence in the post-colony. Rather, their inclusion of previously silenced characters, manipulating familiar characters and events to produce unexpected results, and dismantling their works' "dependence" upon the source texts

suggest a more creative and interaction with local politics that neither reproduces nor denies other narratives of the past.

Chapter 4: The ends of the literary text: Boaventura Cardoso's *Mãe, materno mar* and Eliseo Alberto's *Caracol Beach*

INTRODUCTION

Boaventura Cardoso's *Mãe, materno mar* (2001) and Eliseo Alberto's *Caracol Beach* (1998) are two heterochronical novels that record the reverberations of the Angolan war in the Angolan and Cuban national imaginations, complicating issues of nationality by evoking questions of internal displacement, social reorganization, and exile. Cardoso's tale of a train ride from internal Angola to Luanda that takes fifteen years due to mechanical and external delays, and Alberto's story of a Cuban veteran of the Angolan war who tries to commit suicide to rid himself of the war flashbacks and visions he experiences in the decades after he leaves Cuba for Florida both trace the disruptive social consequences of the war and its all-encompassing revolutionary ideology. The two novels thus evidence exhaustion with the rhetorics of socialist revolution and Marxist utopia in the decades after the war escalates, indicating that armed struggle has failed to bring about positive social change.

The two novels record the excesses of violence necessarily a part of the experience of war and its overflow and reverberations in the lives of post-war communities, represented metaphorically through the communities the novels evoke as well as through the textual styles that both authors develop. In both novels, violent revolution fragments the national body as well as the text that narrates the war's aftermaths. Thus both *Mãe materno mar* and *Caracol Beach* question the very power of

the literary text to adequately narrate postwar realities; while Cardoso's novel locates a tenuous optimism in the collective power of a multitude to change its reality, Alberto's novel reaches a far more cynical and uncertain conclusion. Both novels engage ironic narrative voices to comment not only upon the destructive results of the Angolan war, but also undermine the possibility of collective reconstruction and healing through literature.

Caracol Beach and *Mãe, materno mar* use irony as a tool that is directed against notions of idealistic revolutionary utopias. Rather than an irony pointed at the colonial foundations of each country, like Rui and Carpentier, or at early revolutionary nationalisms, like Agualusa and Arenas, these two novels focus on the concrete struggles for material existence and intellectual reconciliation with the disruption and disillusionment the war has provoked to criticize and dismantle overarching ideologies as guides for bringing about social change. The intermixing of political and religious practices in both novels points to how these discourses and practices take the place of nationalist discourse. However, the textual focus on the material bodies involved—the people displaced from the interior to the Angolan capital in *Mãe, materno mar* and the Cuban soldier sent to fight in Angola who winds up a marginalized outcast in Florida in *Caracol Beach*—reveal how these bodies destabilize the order that politico-religious practices try to impose. At each turn, the bodies exceed, overflow, undermine and negate what is said in the novels.

Both Cardoso (b. 1944) and Alberto (b. 1951) form part of the first generations of authors to publish after Angolan independence (1975) and the Cuban Revolution (1959). Rather than participating in the "enthusiasm" (Rafael Rojas) or euphoria of the years

leading up to and immediately following independence, these two novels can be read as 'writing back' against the national revolutionary and nation-building literature of the earlier generations of writers anticipating the accomplishments of the respective revolutions. Rather than the concrete proposals for new revolutionary nations that some of this earlier literature recorded, Cardosos's and Alberto's works lack concrete national proposals, instead presenting the pivot point of their ironic structures as the totalizing voices of one party rule, using the concrete failures of the Marxist one-party systems and the limited nature of their closed ideologies as practiced in the Angolan and Cuban contexts. Responding to the Cuban involvement in the Angolan war from 1975-1989, these two novels evidence the outcome of Cuba's most involved internationalist project: the failure of the prolonged international ideologically-driven alliance to bring lasting stability to Angola[27]. Both the novels evidence the reverberations Cuban and Angolan brands of Marxism as global decolonizing ideologies used both for nation-building to counteract political and social systems linked to colonial and neocolonial practices in the Caribbean and Africa. However, by ironizing the characters' commitment to international obligations through serving in the war, the narrative perspectives of the novels discussed in this chapter suggest disillusionment and evoke notions of socialist solidarity as naïve impossibilities. These novels might thus be called "post-Marxist," in that they neither wholeheartedly support nor absolutely condemn Marxist-driven nation –building, but

[27] After Cuba's final withdrawal of troops in 1989-1990, the MPLA was reelected to power; refusing to accept the results, UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi broke the peace accords established two years earlier and the civil war continued without Cuba's direct intervention on the side of the MPLA until Savimbi's death in 2002.

rather record a loss of faith in totalizing ideologies, suggesting that all such systems are necessarily corrupt.

Religious practice juxtaposed and intermixed with what Marc Augé terms "political ritual" (Augé 66-68) is central to both novels. For the Angolan war veteran, the protagonist of *Caracol Beach*, assuming the identity of the *santero* and lieutenant Lázaro Samá gives the character a ritual space for trying to recuperate a lost community after his fellow soldiers are all killed in battle. The collective first-person voice in Cardoso's novel, similarly, turns to the evangelical pastors who swell their congregations by promising relief from poverty, war, sickness and other social problems. In each case, however, the characters' faith is betrayed by a system that fails to address systematic change: the faithful of the Angolan prophets when the pastors escape with suitcases full of their congregations' money, and the Cuban soldier whose initiation into *santería* is cut short by Samá's death, and replaced by the soldier's descent into a total madness that has the effect of completely isolating him from any human contact. If, however, the negative irony with which the political systems to which the characters are subject undermines the possibility of relying on such systems, the novels present differing conclusions. The textual undermining of totalizing discourses does not either suggest an alternative totality (such as replacing revolutionary nationalism with another brand) or fatalistically produce total skepticism. As Laura Rice suggests, irony does not only "[capture] ambiguity (as in Homi Bhabha's postcolonial mimicry), it is also a mode of representation and invention that can… engender the new forms of recognition" (Rice 16) among those left in the wake of irony's critical turn. Whereas Cardoso's textual construction of a collective

narrative places the power of agency in the multitude, Alberto's novel's refusal to reach a similarly optimistic conclusion leaves open the question of whether any community broken apart by the violence of the war abroad and the "war at home" that the soldier's suffering represents can ever recuperate.

MÃE, MATERNO MAR

Boaventura Cardoso has been celebrated for recording the "*fala,*" or spoken language, of many different sectors of contemporary Angolan society in his literary works. *Mãe, materno mar* is an exemplary case of this tendency, in its allegorical recreation of the major social forces competing to organize portions of Angolan society in the chaos created by the continuing civil war in the late 1990s, captured in the interactions of the individuals and communities aboard a train that takes fifteen years to travel from the interior city of Malanje to the capital city of Luanda. In this sense, Cardoso's work follows in the path of the early generations of Angolan writers who sought to distinguish and articulate the cultural elements that contribute to creating an Angolan cultural landscape. The novel's main character, a young man named Manecas, grows up during the years of Single Party rule, at a time when 'traditional customs' were suppressed in the name of anti-tribalism and nation-building[28]. As such, Manecas is unfamiliar with many customs and religious and cultural practices that other characters maintain. During the confusion and constant detentions of the train due to mechanical failures and infrastructural problems with the railroad, the resultant social disorganization

[28] An excellent literary example of these policies of the MPLA is Pepetela's *Mayombe* (1980), which presents following "tribal" and regional customs as challenges to the creation of national solidarity.

among the passengers is partially mitigated by a confusing array of evangelical Christian religious leaders who compete for followers in their attempts to organize and order the train's communities. Juxtaposed with the representatives of the Party (the MPLA), Manecas' confused reading of the competing 'ordering' attempts places the Party ideology on the same level of the other circulating discourses of evangelical missionaries, and subjects it to the same criticism.

Criticism of Cardoso's work generally recognizes the social scientific aspect of recording a wide range of Angolan speech and cultural practices, with a narrative style that frequently shifts the narration between third and first-person perspectives, and frequently refuses to stylistically differentiate between the narrative voice's language use and the characters'. The resulting style, while clearly influenced by the social sciences—the author identifies his training as a social scientist and his unpublished thesis on religious practices in Luanda—is not one of traditional narrative detachment from the characters and the story. However, beyond simply recording a snapshot of Angola in the late 1990s, Cardoso's unique narrative style allows a penetrating engagement through his "involved" narrative voice that strengthens its critical potential without creating a separation between the narrative point of view and that of the characters. As Jorge Macedo notes, Cardoso's work is constantly "engaged" with the social issues that come up in his literature: "Ao escritor, preocupa a emanação de uma literatura de permanente intervenção social (literatura engajada), envolvendo sobretudo os extractos sociais mais desfavorecidos e que constituem o subúrbio humano [The author is concerned with creating a literature of permanent social intervention (engaged literature), involving

above all the social elements least favored and that constitute the margins of humanity]" (Macedo 48)[29]. Differentiating itself from earlier versions of "engaged literature" in which social criticism is frequently organized along colonial/ post-colonial divisions or written with a nationalistic project in mind, Cardoso's "polyphonic" narrative techniques allow his texts a critical edge at every turn, such that a constructive project is not so easy to draw out.

Mãe, materno mar is organized into three sections, each recounting a portion of the train's journey, as well as the narration of a long period of detention as various mechanical breakdowns, communication failures and incompetent bureaucrats interrupts its course. In the first section, we see the transition from a recognizable social order organized by the train's class system, in which each passenger knows and maintains his or her place, and everyone seems certain of the course of their trip. This initial social order is disrupted due to the first two-year stop, as the passengers are forced to negotiate their survival through buying and selling goods in a spontaneous market at the train station or through their skills and services they can offer. Cardoso notes in a 2005 interview that the train journey represents a kind of allegory for the course of Angolan history in the late 20th century, during which the "course" of national development is frequently derailed, delayed and re-routed. However, the allegorical structure is certainly not a *roman-à-clef* in which equivalences may be drawn between characters and narrative elements and definite historical occurrences, such that a deterministic or positivistic narrative structure points the way to an idealized future. Nonetheless, the social

[29] Translations are my own.

disruption that the first train breakdown provokes can perhaps be compared to the upheaval in the years after independence in Angola, when previously accepted notions of social organization cease to be relevant, and the war's disruption forces to the forefront a plethora of new organizational forces.

The narrator notes, as the train takes off on the first leg of its journey, that the passengers are divided up according to a clear class system that corresponds with the first, second and third class passenger cars:

> De entre os passageiros tinha gente de os vários estratos sociais: nas carruagens da frente, primeira e segunda classes, ia gente bem vestida com ares de quem vive bem ou pelo menos sem grandes dificuldades; nas carruagens da terceira classe estavam os pés-descalços, gente humilde e simples. (40)[30]
>
> [Among the passengers there were people of various social strata: in the front cars, the first and second classes, were the well-dressed, with the air of those who live well or at least without much difficulty; in the third-class cars were the unshod, humble and simple people].

Among the first-class passengers are the family of a young woman on her way to her wedding, accompanied by her parents, family, bridesmaids and the D.J. who will provide the music at the wedding reception. The family has spared no expense on the wedding preparations, traveling with the wedding banquet including the spectacular cake topped with a miniature bride and groom.

[30] All translations from Cardoso's texts are my own.

The bride's family, who go to great lengths to make sure their wealth and social status are recognized by the rest of the passengers, demonstrate how the class system left in place by the Portuguese colonial system is at once the only point of reference for those who defined their social relationships through it, and yet increasingly irrelevant as the major social shifts in the last decades of the twentieth century reorganize Angolan society. Once the family arrives at the bridegroom's town a year too late for the wedding only to discover that the groom has moved to Luanda, the father recollects when his daughter met her future husband and their period of courtship. Soon after the two meet, the future groom is accosted in the street and injured severely enough to send him to the hospital; the father of the bride sends men out to find and beat the men who attacked his daughter's fiancé (127). The father's actions exemplify several social realities in the Angola of the 1990s: first, the situation points to the lack of state-sanctioned police power, meaning, second, that individuals use private force to maintain order. Thus in the absence of effective state police power, those with the monetary access as well as the social capital to enforce social ordering become those who define justice and mete out punishment. This reflects, as theorists from Fanon to Mbembe have pointed out, the ways that the colonial state reproduces itself in post-colonial societies in Africa, wherein colonial power structures are virtually transplanted and reproduced from the colonial ruling classes to the bourgeois class that replaces them.

A further conversation between the father and a family friend points, however, to the contradictions that the bride's father's social position brings out. As the friend inquires about the bride's future husband, he asks, "como é? [what's he like?]"; upon

being made to understand that the groom is *mulato*, he asks whether "não seria melhor ela casar com um branco, [wouldn't it be better for her to marry a white man]" reproducing the colonial system of "whitening" in which marrying a person on lighter skin ensured a corresponding elevation of social class. The father replies that the groom is good enough for his daughter, and that since "já não é tempo colonial [it is not the colonial period anymore]" (129) perhaps the system of racial and social organization upon which the colonial system depended is losing relevance, even among those classes who depended upon it for their privileged positions.

Indeed, even if the class/ caste system enforced through the colonial era is disappearing, the novel does not make clear exactly what will take its place. As the narration continues, the religious allegiances that divide the train passengers prove to be deceptive and transitory markers of social allegiance. By the end of the narrative, when the whole Angolan nation has placed its hope in the miracles the prophets can bring and ends up deceived and disillusioned, the text again points to the disappointment that serves as a bridge between colonial and post-colonial suffering. The tension between the father's reproduction of the inherited colonial system, on one hand, and his recognition of its growing irrelevance, on the other, is symbolized through the decay and disappearance of the wedding banquet at the train's first major stop. Once the train breaks down and the repairs are drawn out over more and more time, the passengers are forced to improvise their clothing and sustenance; an open-air market springs up around the train station as the passengers sell what they don't need in order to purchase what they don't have. As the father of the bride finally abandons the idea of arriving in time for the wedding, he

decides to sell pieces of the wedding cake for profit; however, once he arrives at the car, he discovers that ants and rats have consumed all of it, and thus with it the symbol of his social position and wealth.

In this way, the story of the train ride introduces a narrative structure that follows the constantly shifting social organization that the trials of the train ride introduce into the once neatly-divided social class divisions. As the material wealth of the bride's family dissipates and loses relevance as the train ride continues, the divisions and alliances come to be organized around ideological, rather than material, wealth. The bourgeois reflections of an upper-class family give way to the religious alliances of the various churches and sects, and a new battleground for social organization is defined.

The train journey, at once an allegory for Manecas' search for his "return to the maternal waters" at Luanda's coast and an allegory for the course of Angolan history over the last decades of the 20th century, serves as the catalyst for demonstrating the competing forces that seek to organize the interactions of the passengers. The most prominent of these are the various religious sects who compete for members and attention every time a point of conflict is raised among the passengers. At the first stop of the train, a violent fight breaks out among the passengers forced into uncomfortable quarters and uncertain of how long they will be detained; the resulting four deaths open up the first major confrontation among the religious leaders over the appropriate burial of the dead:

> Um dos mortos pertencia à Igreja do Bom Pastor cujo pastor não se dava com o da Igreja de Jesus Cristo Negro, a que pertencia o segundo morto. Questões de família, tinham se zangado por desavenças na partilha de heranças. Um outro

defunto era da Igreja do Profeta Simon Ntangu António originária de uma região fronteiriça de donde nascera a Igreja de Jesus Cristo Salvador de Angola. Eram duas regiões em que durante anos nunca tinham tido nenhum problema, a paz era sossegada até ao dia em que se começou a falar que nos terrenos vizinhantes tinha petróleo. Ih! Que aí então é que começaram as azedas conversas, os aziagos ares. Para além dessas quatro igrejas, tinha também gente que representava outras pequenas confissões religiosas como a Igreja do Bom Repouso, a Igreja dos Sete Apóstolos, a Igreja do Bomfim, a Assembleia da Salvação, a Igreja da Paz nos Corações e outras mais pequenas ainda cujo número de fiéis não ultrapassava dez. (51)

[One of the dead belonged to the Church of the Good Pastor whose pastor did not get along with the pastor of the Church of Black Jesus Christ, to which the second dead man belonged. Questions of family, who had become angry at disagreements over dividing up inheritances. Another dead man was from the Church of the Prophet Simon Ntangu António, originally from a border region, where the Church of Jesus Christ Savior of Angola had been born. The two regions had had no problems for years, peace was quietly maintained until the day when it began to be said that neighboring lands had oil. Ih! From then is when the sharp words began, the unhappy airs. Beyond these four churches, there were people who confessed other small religions like the Church of Good Repose, The Church of the Seven Apostles, the Church of Bomfim [*good*

end], the Assembly of Salvation, The Church of Peace in the Heart and other smaller ones still whose number of faithful did not exceed ten.]

The parodic litany of churches represented among the passengers makes fun of the plethora of evangelical movements that take hold in Angola during the final years of colonial control and explode in the 1980s and 1990s, by dividing up the passenger's allegiances by their membership to the churches. The suggestion that these allegiances are governed more by regional origin and opportunistic economic interests serves as a subtext, and suggests that by creating smaller and smaller church groups, each member and leader is looking for his or her own advantage. Manecas, a character raised to be a believer in the one Party, finds himself confused first by the violence that erupts on the train leading to the four deaths, and secondly by the second round of antagonistic competition over the control of the funeral rites and burial of the bodies of the competing religious organizations. Manecas' does not know how to handle the situation: "Nunca na vida dele tinha assistido a tão grande e prolongada luta [Never in his life had He witnessed such a huge and prolonged fight]" (50), a clear metonymic reference to the ideological stakes of the decades of war from 1975 until 2002. After seeing the argument among the pastors over the proper funeral customs for each dead person, Manecas reflects that

> ele, o mar oceânico, estava olhar para todos os lados na descoberta de um mundo que nunca tinha conhecido. Lá em Malange ele ouvia falar de certos rituais fúnebres que aconteciam nas sanzalas distantes da cidade, mas nunca manifestara interesse em conhecê-los. Não era ele um menino do liceu, educado nas boas

educadas maneiras, que freqüentava os bons e os civilizados ambientes? (56)

[he, the oceanic sea, was looking around to every side discovering a world that he had never known. In Malange he had heard of certain funerary rituals that took place on the plantations far from the city, but he had never shown interest in learning about them. Hadn't he attended high school, and been educated in good manners, who frequented good and civilized places?]

The narrative, presented in this instant through the interpretive eyes of Manecas, is in a sense a discovery of the pluricultural forces that the disruption of the post-independence years has sparked in Angola. Manecas' story is structured along his search for a return to the "maternal waters" –echoing the redemption that Rui's characters find in the river-goddess Quianda, as well as that that which Alberto's main character, Beto Milanés, searches for through devotion to the *santa* Yemayá—that he leaves behind in Malange, and rediscovers when he finally arrives at the seashore in Luanda; the train ride provides a mode of accelerated discovery of the cultural forces that are ordering his society. The religious practices are foreign to Manecas because he is "civilized" and "educated"; his rhetoric reflects the MPLA's policy of anti-tribalism and establishment of a national revolutionary culture that through the period of its single-party rule sought to erase the cultural practices specific to certain regions and communities. Deliberately distancing itself from "pan-Africanist" leaders, the MPLA employs this policy in contrast to the practices of, for example, neighboring Zairian dictator Mobutu Sese Seko (aligned with the MPLA's rival party UNITA), who implemented a program of "reafricanization"

through an amalgam of "authentic African" cultural practices as an answer back to the erasure of such practices during the colonial era, and as a manipulative way of securing his own power. This is a situation that is frequently criticized in literary works such as V.Y. Mudimbe's novel *Le bel immonde*; according to Pius Ngandu Nkashama, the ritualized political practices of dictatorship have a direct reflection in the rise of similarly ritualized and mythologized evangelical churches throughout central-Western Africa (Ngandu Nkashama 25).

In the context of Cardoso's novel, however, the critically ironic narration of the proliferation of religious establishments that crop up not only references concentrated and manipulative power in the hands of a charismatic leader, but is additionally inseparable from the way that Marxist revolutionary culture is insinuated into the cultural education of the youth who grow up in the early decades of independence. As the funeral rituals get underway, "No ar se ouviam já cânticos religiosos à mistura com cantos revolucionários, o que era previsível já que no Partido tinha muitos crentes, e, nas igrejas, militantes disfarçados em crentes [In the air could be heard religions canticles, mixed with revolutionary chants, it was already foreseeable that in the Party there were many believers, and, in the churches, militants disguised as believers]" (56). That is, the revolutionary education of the populace has been incomplete, since some Party members still believe in and belong to various churches, and the Party is thus recast as a competing ideology that takes opportunistic advantage of a period of crisis and upheaval to gain members and spread its influence.

The suggested process of replacement of the church organizations for the operations of the state open questions about the contours of political sovereignty in post-independence Angola, both in terms of the operations of the state upon the bodies of its subjects and the sovereignty of these subjects over their own bodies. Reflecting a tradition of conceiving of "masses" as apolitical until they are "made conscious" through the speech of the charismatic leader, the passage comparing the process of political recruiting to religious evangelizing points both to the operations of the religious/ governing body upon its subjects, but also to the way that these "masses" resist neat classification into the three classes initially represented on the train ride. In a parody of the body-as-capital model of the neoliberal state (Foucault), the bodies of the train riders—the Angolan people—become the prizes of a tug-and-pull among the various political and religious figures.

While the churches and church leaders appear to be fictional constructions within the text, mixing pieces of biographies of a range of important historical evangelical prophets, they do represent general characteristics of the proliferation of Protestant churches in Angola in the last half of the twentieth century, and specific characteristics of the church leaders recall identifying features of important historical religious leaders accessible to those familiar with contemporary Angolan social history. It is therefore through the construction of the characters of the church leaders that much of the political content of the novel is transmitted. The oral/ spoken style of the text thus permits a collective ironic voice that directs its criticism at the specific religious personalities who are part of the train journey, and by extension, at the collective of opportunistic religious

leaders who take advantage of the social upheaval of a country subject to a continuous war to gain, according to the text, influence and personal profit.

The leader of the Igreja de Jesus Cristo Salvador de Angola, derives his authority through his claims to have traveled abroad to Brazil and the United States, where he visited Harlem and Martin Luther King, Junior's Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. His rendition of the United States' South gospel anthem "Oh, Happy Day!" is interpreted and taught to his illiterate followers in "kinguelês," a phonetic mixture of Kimbundu, English, and Portuguese such that "Hué! Hué! Hué! Reconhecível era só mesmo a música. O resto quem que podia de entender? [Only the music was recognizable. Who could understand the rest]?" (94). As a parody of a process of transculturation, the resulting song repeated by the pastor and his followers is not a new cultural product that reflects a creative process of cultural *mestiçagem* but an unintelligible artifact that loses its force when deployed in translation.

Another of the leaders, the Prophet Simon Ntangu António, depends on his staff for his ability to communicate with God, "pois o bastão lhe tinha sido posto nas mãos no momento em que a Senhora das Boas-Águas lhe aparecera para lhe revelar a sua profética missão. Sem o bastão o Profeta era e não era, um simples Lukau Ntangu António, não mais Simon, o não-ser, os vagos ares. [the staff had been placed in his hands at the moment in which the Lady of Good Waters had appeared to him to reveal his prophetic mission. Without the staff the Prophet was and was not, a simple Lukau Ntangu António, Simon no more, the not-being, the vacant air]" (152). The Pastor of the Igreja do Bomfim, the Profeta Simão Mukongo, in spite of being "uma figura humilde na aparência

e nos modos [a humble figure in his appearance and his manner]" and the fact that he does not have "o dom de oratória necessário [the necessary oratorical gift]" (172) that the other religious leaders are able to effectively employ, begins to swell his numbers through the miraculous cures that he is able to perform. The rapid pace of the shifting points of view—the narrator is in one moment a member of the believing audience, and in another, the skeptical voice that reveals some point of trickery that the prophets employ in order to maintain their hold over their believers—reflects both the rapid movement of the populace from one church and set of beliefs to another, as well as the accelerated pace at which new religious movements crop up and quickly find a core of practitioners. Thus the collective narrative voice reveals the para-bureaucratic operations of the religious system as well as point to its limits.

Manecas, as an observer rather than a participant in the cacophony of religious proclamations, is the voice in the text who bridges the various religious discourses with the state-sanctioned Marxist-Leninist ideology. The novel's clear placement in the late war years is evidenced, therefore, by a movement away from an opposition between Marxism and religious practice, as well as a lack of opposition between Marxism and other cultural practices that are subsequently mixed and reinvented in the new religions of the late-war era. Manecas, discussing the religious phenomena that he encounters on the journey with members of the Party, believes that the problem of the relationship between the State and the religious entities

> tinha de ser visto sob uma perspective marxista-leninista, sim senhor, mas sem dogmatismos, que tinha muita coisa que a doutrina científica não era capaz de

explicar, que a visão do materialismo histórico sobre a religião era, de certo modo, redutora, que a religião em África carecia de um estudo mais aprofundado, que tinha muito fogo encoberto que precisava de ser bem remexido, que, de qualquer modo, ele era pela total liberdade religiosa. (159-60)

[had to be seen through a Marxist-Leninist perspective, yes sir, but without dogmatism, that there were many things that scientific doctrine was incapable of explaining, that the historical materialist vision of religion was, in a way, reductive, that religion in Africa needed more profound study, that there was much hidden fire that needed to be stirred up, that, in any case, he was for total religious freedom][31].

That is, Manecas displays the point of view that Marxism, in addition to competing with the religious voices prevalent in the late-war society, has its ideological limits in the context of the plural Angolan society that prevent its complete ideological hegemony.

The ambivalence that Manecas expresses and the support that the character espouses for the existence of religious freedom despite his and the narrator/ author's recognition and criticism of the many abuses of authority that the pastor's display has its roots in the position of Protestant churches in colonial Angola. While the state-allied Catholic Church had many outspoken reformers and supporters of decolonization,

[31] There is an interesting parallel between the point of view that Manecas offers of abandoning the earlier and more strident condemnations of syncretistic religious practices of the early years of socialist allegiance for a position of accommodation, and the Cuban state's legalization and subsequent embracing of *santeros* in the 1990s.

through the history of colonization in Angola, many of the Protestant missions, especially the Baptist missions established by British and American missionaries in Angola and the Belgian Congo (Now Congo-Kinshasa), were the sites of both the birth of prophetic movements that became large churches or religious movements similar to the churches evoked in the novel, and as the Portuguese PIDE (Polícia Internacional e da Defesa do Estado [International Police for the Defense of the State] archives indicate, were constantly under surveillance and accused of fostering anti-Portuguese sentiment and encouraging nationalism and independence among the populaces with whom they had contact.

One of the earliest prophetic movements that had an impact on Angolan and Zairian religious culture was the "Kimbanguist" Church, founded by Simão Kimbangu in the early 20th century, also sometimes called the Igreja dos Negros [Church of Blacks]. The other most influential indigenous church movement roughly during the same period (the first half of the twentieth century) is the "Tokoist" Church, named for its founder Simon Toco, officially titled the Igreja de Jesus Cristo de Todo o Mundo [The Church of Jesus Christ of the Whole World]. These two churches, the most well-known, influential and largest of the many Protestant religious movements in Angola, have many parallels with the churches and church leaders described in Cardoso's novel, especially with the Pastor of the Igreja de Jesus Cristo Salvador de Angola and the Prophet Simon Ntangu António.

Mãe, materno mar's uniquely heteroglossic style appropriately transmits the mixture of the many different religious and cultural influences that result in the

contemporary religious phenomena that are presented as being widely influential in the novel. As the problematic but wide-reaching ethnographic work *Movimentos proféticos e mágicos em Angola* by Portuguese researcher Eduardo dos Santos indicates, religious movements were often interpreted both by their adherents and by the colonial authorities that sought to limit or extinguish their influence as the loci for nationalistic and pro-independence action. In the case of the Kimbanguist church, whose influence spanned both sides of the Congo River into what is now the southern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the northern parts of Angola, dos Santos notes that:

> No domínio político, o kiambanguismo foi o primeiro movimento de reacção exteriorizada em todo o Baixo Congo. Em 1921 não existia nesta vasta região nenhum modo de expressão política. O aparecimento do movimento religioso lançado por Simão Kimbango, movimento sincrético negro, provocou naturalmente a cristalização, à volta dele, de uma infinidade de outras tendências reacionárias à influência européia. (96)

> [In the political sphere, Kimbanguism was the first movement of overt reaction in all the Lower Congo. In 1921 there was no mode of political expression in the entire vast region. The appearance of the religious movement launched by Simão Kimbango, a black syncretistic movement, provoked, naturally, the crystallization around him of an infinity of other reactionary tendencies to European influence].

That is to say, regardless of any insistence on the part of Simão Kimbangu that his church was *not* overtly political, the simple existence of an "indigenous" African church

under African authority served as a point of resistance to the European-dominated religious authorities both through the state-sanctioned Catholic church in the Portuguese colonies, and through the various U.S. and European-sponsored Protestant missionaries. The inclusion of various syncretistic religious practices—Kimbangu's father was a feitiçeiro [a witch doctor] and the church leader had been educated in Baptist missionary schools—serves, according to dos Santos, as further confirmation of the religion's legitimacy in the eyes of its practitioners. Like Simão Toco, Kimbangu was imprisoned and the practice of Kimbanguismo was made illegal during the latter colonial period; like the Tocoist church, with which the Kimbanguist church shares many similarities, both organizations declare a policy of non-alliance to political parties and encourage non-violence. The rise and reach of these religious organizations, however, is precisely the point at which Cardoso's novel enters to expose not the illegitimacy of syncretistic religious movements, but the potential for the leaders of such movements to acquire significant influence over their believers that extends into the realms traditionally inhabited by the state. The absence of this control and its replacement by the churches, according to the structures of the text, thus serve both as a criticism of the failed first-generation independence government as well as the abuses that religious leaders are able to impose as a result of a lack of check on their power and influence among communities in upheaval.

The topic of religious syncretism and the role of organized churches in Angola is one that also is addressed in Cardoso's previous novel, *Maio, mês de Maria* (1997). In fact, the two novels might be read as two parts of a structural social criticism of Angola:

Maio, mês de Maria takes place just before and just after the moment of transition from colonial rule to independence in Angola, while *Mãe, materno mar* occurs sometime after independence; *Maio, mês de Maria* is set in Luanda while almost all of *Mãe, materno mar* takes place in the small cities and countryside east of Luanda; *Maio, mês de Maria* addresses the influence of traditional religious practices together through the Catholic church while *Mãe, materno mar* ironically takes on evangelical Protestant movements as they are reinterpreted and adapted to Angolan society. The parallel alliteration of the two titles serves as an additional link between the two novels, suggesting narrative and structural continuity.

The main character in *Maio, mês de Maria* is an *assimilado*, who finds himself caught between the old colonial world in which his clear path to raising his social status—assimilation among the white Portuguese—is confused and undermined at independence, the point at which João Segunda no longer understands his social role. As Inocência Mata points out, João Segunda is "dolorosamente iniciado no novo regime politico [painfully initiated into the new political regime]" (Mata 155), painfully because he had always thought of himself as Portuguese. If João Segunda is a "second-class" Portuguese citizen, a fact that Inocência Mata observes he is unable to recognize ("Maio, Mês De Maria: As Águas Da Memória Em Movimento" 155), Manecas is the first generation who does not have to struggle with renegotiating his social position due to the change in governance; if the focus of João Segunda's conflict is the point of transition, the focus of Manecas' is the changing social organization that replaces the colonial regime.

Mata continues to make several observations in *Maio, mês de Maria* that extend in their relevance to *Mãe, materno mar*. The temporal focus of the plot, as the title indicates, is the month of May; in addition to being the month dedicated to the Marian cult, it is a rainy month in Luanda, indicating the constant presence of water. According to Mata, the presence of water indicates a constant state of "to come (*devir*)" (156), as well as a state of constant movement and change; as a result, the symbol of water indicates the impossibility of reliance on a fixed narrative of the future, creating what she terms a "*descronologização* [*dechronicalization*]" of history, such that no "destination" of the historical plot is discernable. This technique allows the novel to ironize, already in the moment of independence, any reliance on religious belief or political ideology as monolithic (156). This thread, which continues through the narrative of *Mãe, materno mar*, can be read in the context of the second novel as directed at the Messianic "imminence" of both traditional Marxism as well as the evangelical prophetic movements. The presence of water—the "maternal waters" which Manecas leaves when he leaves home and to which he returns when he reaches the seashore at the end of the novel—evoke the sustained water symbol over the course of the two novels.

The critique of historical immanence introduced in *Maio, mês de Maria* continues in the context of the Prophet's words and action in *Mãe, materno mar*. The Prophet Simão Ntangu António, whose narration eclipses the other religious figures in the last half of the novel, represents both the syncretistic tendencies of the new religions that abound in Angola during the late twentieth century, and also the many contradictions of a Messianic theology mixed with financial opportunism. The narration of how the Prophet

is "commissioned" and receives both his religious sanction and the cane that symbolizes his powers provides an example of the two tendencies we have mentioned. The Prophet, exiled to the Congo where he is a devoted pedagogue in the Catholic Church, is fishing one evening (thus suggesting parallels with the Christian Apostles) and sees in the water

> uma cabeça humana, uma mulher, talvez novamente a sereia, não, era uma mulher negra, alta e elegante, trajada com panos de muitas cores e completamente enxutos. Ó Nfumu-Nzambi! Que lhe veio logo no pensamento, aquela mulher vinda do fundo das águas do Kinzwanu, que se mantinha suspensa acima do rio, sorridente e bonita só podia ser uma santa. (B. Cardoso 239)

> [a human head, a woman, perhaps the mermaid again, no, it was a black woman, tall and elegant, draped with clothes of many colors and completely dry. Oh Nfumu-Nzambi! What came to his thoughts, that woman who came from the deep of the waters of the Kinzwanu, who stayed suspended over the river, smiling and pretty, could only be a saint].

While at first the future Prophet is confused because he thinks that "Santa preta só podia ser bruxa [a black saint can only be a witch]" (239), he shortly realizes that the "Senhora das Boas-Águas [Lady of the Good Waters]" has directed him to return to his native land of Angola to start his own church: "partiria para Angola, donde viera jovem ainda fugido da Guerra colonial de sessenta e um. Partiria para a sua terra natal em missão de evangelização onde criaria uma igreja sua, genuína e autenticamente africana [he would leave for Angola, from where he had come as a youth fleeing the Colonial war

of ’61. He would leave for his native land on a mission of evangelization where he would create his own church, genuine and authentically African]” (246).

The irony of the “authentically African” church lies both in the hypocritical words and actions of the prophet upon the establishment of his church, and also serves as a critical commentary upon the prevalence of just such manipulative and calculating figures that are common in post-colonial Angola, and that seek to displace the power of the state in order to concentrate it in the hands of the religious leader. This dual nature of the Prophet’s church reflects the dystopian configuration of a point of view of a populace that has lost confidence in the Party’s ability to run the state, and further parodies not just the promises of the political regime that has failed to establish stability, but also the train passenger’s willingness to believe the same miraculous promises for radical change as soon as they are packaged in a new idiom. At the first mass meeting of the Prophet’s church, where he promises to cure all the sick including those ill with the “made –up” disease of AIDS (252) is filled with repeated claims to be the one true Prophet in a world full of false prophets, the “Light of the World,” (250) and the Savior of the Nation of Angola (250-51). His promise to bring peace, progress and justice to Angola (250) is reflective of the Party’s promises through the first decades of independence as well; however, the Prophet’s asserting his position as *replacing* the organization of the state rather than operating under its authority or in its service is made clear at this first meeting.

During a pause in the Prophet’s speech, an unidentified member of the crowd shouts out the Revolutionary call-and-response so common during the period during and

following the colonial wars: "'De Cabinda ao Cunene um só…?', e os fiéis responderam a uma só voz: 'Povo!'. 'Uma só…?' –outra vez a anónima voz no comando, e o povo gritou eufórico: 'Nação!'['From Cabinda to Cunene one...?' and the faithful responded in a single voice: 'People!' 'One...?' –another anonymous voice commanded, and the people shouted, euphoric: 'Nation!']" (250). This outburst, rather than contributing to the Prophet's claims to bring the nation together, draws the Prophet's ire: "Fica assente de hoje em diante que aqui na minha Igreja não quero ouvir estas satânicas palavras-de-ordem. Isto aqui não é nenhum comício de partido, porra! [I decree from today forward that here in my church I will not hear these Satanic words-of-order. This is not some Party rally, dammit!]" (251). However, to the crowd represented in this scene as well as to readers familiar with the way that revolutionary nationalist doctrine was affirmed—through just such "palavras-de-ordem" as the speaker shouted out—the similarities between the Prophet's promises and the Party's are obvious. Both promise to bring order and organization to the state, and the Prophet's negative reaction to the mixing of the rhetorics of the Party and of the church only serve to heighten the ironic effect of the Prophet's claim not to represent any party or political organization.

The narrator immediately reveals the extent of the Prophet's hypocrisy: it opens several supermarkets, department stores, bakeries, restaurants, butcher shops and stalls in the market; all for the 'benefit' of the believers. The narrator, in describing the litany of money-making enterprises that the church opens in Luanda uses such adjectives as "generoso [generous]" and "magnánimo [magnanimous]" in its works, that parody the Prophet's "selling" of the church in order to build his luxurious mansion, ostensibly for

his “profundo e prolongado retiro espiritual [profound and prolonged spiritual rest]” (253) so he can continue to expand his numbers. The confusion over his status—true Prophet or charlatan—continues through to his final arrival in Luanda after fifteen years proselytizing aboard the train, when among the many blessings and cures he bestows upon his flock, and during the celebrations with which the whole city welcomes the Prophet back to his home church in Luanda, competing rumors of his healing powers and his lack of them converge in a vacillating celebration and claims for his death among the crowds. In a passage that points to an image evoked in *Caracol Beach* of a catalogue of the “diseased” exiled bodies lining up to receive the *santo* Bablú Ayé’s redemption, Cardoso signals the litany of social ills dividing the nation that its citizens naively and desperately turn to the Prophet to fix: businessmen looking for new opportunities, political opportunists looking for a Parliament seat, help with housing, educational scholarships, jobs, a young beauty queen contestant who seeks a crown, orphaned children looking for their parents, the parents of disappeared youth requesting information about their loved ones, displaced peoples seeking reparations for land and property lost, even the family of a recently dead relative who hope the Prophet will bring him back to life (278-82). The juxtaposition of the multitude of petitions the people make to the Prophet dramatizes not only the social disruption in the aftermath of decades of the Angolan civil war, but also points to the social problems that the state—here replaced by the figure of the Prophet—has yet to confront and is yet unable to resolve.

Thus the confusion of the accelerating narration and style of run-on sentences culminates with a mysterious stranger who shows up at the airport asking the Prophet for

some of the local seafood delicacies, as well as some of the "brilliant little stones" (292) that the country was known for. Each of these requests highlights not only the failures of state functions by the post-independence regime, but points to the Prophet as a metaphorical state-replacement who exercise the deterritorialized functions of the para-state organization (Mbembe "Necropolitics"): control of natural resources, represented in the diamonds the strange visitor requests as well as calls for clean water and affordable food; the creation and control of capital beyond state boundaries, represented both in monetary loot and the bodies of the Prophet's followers as well as his rising control over urban enterprises; and finally biopolitical (necro-political) control over the lives and deaths of their subjects. This last and key element is portrayed repeatedly in *Mãe, materno mar* through the repeated violent outbursts among the church followers, and metonymized in the body of the dead man which the family carries to Luanda to request that the Prophet restore him to life, a request that is not granted before the Prophet makes his escape. The parallel between the recent political and economic history in Angola could hardly be more clear—the novel's accusations of opacity, corruption, forced national underdevelopment for the benefit of foreign investors, police abuse and political indifference that *Mãe, materno mar* levies against the prophets have plagued the Angolan postcolonial government as well, but rarely if ever directly from within the nation either through literary or journalistic means[32].

[32] The degree to which Angolan authors typically engage in self-censorship is highlighted in this novel by the fact that the stranger's request remains unfulfilled. While the text certainly points to known cases of abuse of natural and human resources on the part of the MPLA government through parallels with the Prophet, suggesting the Prophet has his hand in the diamond industry, the Minister's ambiguous response to

In the midst of this confusion, Manecas returns to the sea to dip his toes in the "maternais águas [maternal waters]" at the shore. He dips his feet in the sea waters as he contemplates the possibility for his future in the capital city. If, on the one hand, the notion of "maternal waters" is an ironic commentary on the church congregations' constant hope for miraculous deliverance and instant transformation, the solitary figures of Manecas suspended at the edge of the sea suggests the possibility of a new non-ideologically prescriptive and yet undefined future. The suggestion of a cyclical and ritual new beginning represented in Manecas' "baptism" in the sea waters, leaves the reader with a notion of hope for a future; if the collective narrator's voice draws the readers in to the national body, the "maternal waters" of the title evoked in the seashore on the coast of Luanda suggest both the potential for a new beginning as well as a re-writing of the history recorded in the novel. It thus suggests the possibility of healing and redemption, just as Beto's prayers to Yemayá in *Caracol Beach* serve as the possibility of redemption from a tortured and fractured exile existence.

CARACOL BEACH

Whereas Cardoso's "plurivocal" novel focuses on the aftereffects of the disruption of Angola's protracted war on many intersecting communities, Alberto's takes a different approach. The main character of *Caracol Beach* is completely isolated, and almost entirely disconnected from his surroundings as a result of the trauma he has suffered seeing his colleagues killed in Angola. In fact, the soldier's trauma, symbolized

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the stranger—that some men are "working on procuring the 'stones'" –does not openly condemn the state, leaving interpretation up to the reader.

in the Bengal tiger he imagines is pursuing him whenever his perception of reality slips, is emphasized by the character's condition of exile from Cuba in Caracol Beach, Florida. The narrative vacillates among a number of different points of view, separating the distinct narrative voices into different chapters. This narrative technique, like Cardoso's, provides the perspective of several different characters on each situation. However, Alberto's style, rather than capturing a collective sense of the action as does *Mãe, materno mar*, serves to emphasize the lack of communication among the characters and heightens the isolation of the Cuban ex-soldier from his surroundings and from human interaction. The effects of the war, therefore, manifest themselves differently: in Cardoso's novel they result in the disruption of communities and mass movement of people within Angola (internal displacement) and result in new organizational configurations and new positions of power within the transient Angolan communities. In the case of Alberto's novel, the soldier's position represents the ironic aftereffects of an internationalist "war of solidarity": he is isolated from his military community, from his nation, and from the Cuban-exile community, specifically the U.S. diaspora. His position also serves to challenge the official rhetoric that the self-sacrifice of the "all-volunteer" Cuban forces in Angola represent an extension of the Afro-Cuban national narrative and the notion of world socialist solidarity in the Angolan-Cuban collaboration that supersedes national alliance. In fact, ironically, the situation of the soldier points much more to the dynamics of national exiles and the reconfiguration of the imagined distant nation than to the erasure of that national space in a new era of world revolutionary utopia.

Perhaps Alberto's most famous work prior to *Caracol Beach* is 1997's *Informe contra mí mismo*, an auto-biographical nonfiction work which the author writes in response to the Cuban government's request that he inform on his family, particularly his noted poet father, Eliseo Diego. The disillusionment and authorial position of writing-from-exile that is reflected in *Caracol Beach* is already present in Alberto's *Informe*; like the main character, Alberto served in Angola and after publishing his *Informe* has been increasingly critical of the Castro government's sacrificing of Cuban youth to political ends[33]. The ironic voice with which Alberto discusses Cuba's revolutionary government is reflected in the character of the soldier: after his participation in a "liberatory" campaign, the soldier is figuratively imprisoned in his mental disease, his exile, his isolation and his eventual suicide. As he ironically announces as he kidnaps a group of teenagers who are unfortunate enough to run into him, "Yo soy de Cubita la Bella, Territorio Libre de América [I'm from Cuba the Beautiful, the liberated territory of America]" (136; 103)[34]. The comment implicitly faults Cuba (the political entity, the reader assumes) with the soldier's current state—as the author notes in the preface to the novel, the soldier is "casi un inocente [almost innocent]" (9) of the crimes he imagines he commits in Angola, as well as the real ones his madness drives him to in Florida.

The plot of the novel revolves around one night in which the soldier, a watchman at a car salvage yard, kidnaps three teenagers and forces them to help him commit suicide. The driving force of the narrative arrives at a similar conclusion to Cardoso's

[33]See Jesús Hernández Cuellar. "Encuentro con Eliseo Alberto, Premio Alfaguara'98". *Contacto* Oct. 1999. http://www.contactomagazine.com/lichi.htm

[34] The first page number listed refers to the Spanish edition of the novel while the second one refers to the English translation by Edith Grossman. Both the original and the translated novels have the same title.

novel: total disillusionment with ideologically-driven collective action to positively change societies. Where Cardoso's novel focuses on the way that new ideological communities collectively reorganize Angola, reducing the influence of the Marxist-allied party to one voice among many, Alberto's novel records the interior dimensions of several characters: the exiled Cuban ex-soldier, a group of teenagers celebrating their high school graduation, and the sheriff who eventually discovers the soldier's kidnapping and the deaths of two of the teenagers as they attempt to escape from the soldier. The structural irony in Alberto's novel focuses on the moments during which the separate characters finally come together in the same physical space the night the soldier finally kills himself. This structure is ironic because, like in Cardoso's novel, the physical proximity of the characters, to which the entire narrative course of the novel builds, does nothing to accomplish either mutual communication among the characters or to elucidate the motives of any of their actions. Rather, the deaths of the soldier and the teenagers heighten the alienating and isolating effects of the trauma that has lead to the soldier's exile and disillusionment.

The narrator introduces the readers to the soldier at the moment that the Bengal tiger appears for the last time—alternatively a symbol for his war-induced madness, as well as the multitudes living the effects of the "war at home" on the island or in exile in the United States. The narrator outlines the soldier's background and his intentions to commit suicide in the first chapter, such that the suspense that the narrative creates throughout the novel focuses not on the anticipation of whether the soldier will carry out his desire, but in the justification for his actions. In the early parts of the novel, the

chapters dedicated to the soldier outline the process of alienation from his various communities—his fellow soldiers, his country, the Cuban exile community in Florida, and finally, the community of the living. From the first chapter, we find out that the source of the soldier's suffering is the day in Angola when his entire company is killed: "'La primera vez que se enfrentó el tigre fue aquella tarde que perdió la razón en Ibondá de Akú [the first time he faced the tiger was the afternoon he lost his mind in Ibondá de Akú]" (19; 6). The narrator makes the result of this loss of reason clear: jumping back to the soldier's present time in Caracol Beach, Florida, the soldier presents the only possible solution to his mental state: "Ese sábado tendría que deshacerse del tigre de la única manera en que aún era possible el duelo con el pasado: liquidándose a sí mismo [On that Saturday he would have to get rid of the tiger in the only way that his battle the past was still possible: by exterminating himself]" (21; 8).

The constant presence of the tiger at the moments when Beto Milanés, the soldier, experiences flashbacks to his war experiences as well as when his suicidal impulses are strongest recall Cuban national patriarch José Martí's use of the lurking tiger as a metaphor for the neocolonial presence waiting to "pounce" upon the unconscious masses in his 1892 essay "Nuestra América". Indeed, accusations of Cuban colonialism were a mainstay of the opposition party UNITA's leader Jonas Savimbi's criticisms of MPLA politics. The use of the symbol of the tiger in *Caracol Beach* certainly undermines the Cuban party-line that the Angolan war is a war of solidarity among socialist sympathizers and among African-descended communities. The subtext of Alberto's use of the tiger also points to a cynical interpretation of the Cuban involvement in the war as useless

political posturing with a horrifically destructive effect on those who fought in it. The irony of Beto's self-sacrifice to the tiger as a result of his madness inverts the spirit of "deber nacional [national duty]" and solidarity with which the war was portrayed in official media. Beto's suicide is, instead, absurd and meaningless, reflecting his character's and the novel's condemnation of war violence.

The narrator of the novel does not provide any historical background information intended to inform the reader of the history of Cuba's involvement in Angola or explicitly state an authorial opinion on the effects of the war on the soldiers or general populace that lived through it. Rather, the readers must piece together the history in which the soldier is involved through the character's disparate concrete references to a time and place, the author's comments in the preface, and the reader's own background in recent Cuban history. First, the narrative effect of this technique forces the reader to see the conflict only through the tortured memories of the soldier, and second, it allows a kind of generalized anonymity to the war situation. The period of Cuban military involvement in Angola between 1975 and 1989 was originally billed as an internationalist mission of world African solidarity, but as it is evoked in *Caracol Beach*, becomes a disastrous jumbled confusion of unclear allies, tenuous allegiances and unspeakable violence.

In the preface to the novel, Alberto recounts the process that led him to write *Caracol Beach*, noting that in the initial screenwriting workshop in which the plot was outlined, he first conceived of the character of the soldier as a hijacker, from which

> pasó a ser un veterano de California en la Guerra de Vietnam, un marinero argentino en la guerra de las Malvinas, un combatiente Sandinista en la guerrilla

> nicaragüense, un terrorista palestino en la guerra del Medio Oriente, un artillero soviético en la guerra de Afganistán, un piloto inglés en la guerra de Irak, un miliciano croata en la guerra de Bosnia, hasta que terminó convertido en un soldado cubano en la guerra de Angola, 1975-1985. Guerras no faltan. (10)[35]

> he was transformed into a Californian in the Vietnam War, an Argentine sailor in the Malvinas War, a Sandinista guerilla fighter in the Nicaragua war, a Palestinian terrorist in the Middle East war, a Soviet artilleryman in the Afghanistan war, an English pilot in the Iraq war, a Croatian militiaman in the Bosnian war, until he finally became a Cuban soldier in the Angolan War, 1975-1985. There's no lack of wars]. (viii)

This passage, together with the context of the novel, suggests the possibility of a reading of the novel as a criticism of the effects of any war upon the psyche of the soldiers who fight it. However, the novel is also sufficiently detailed about the sociological context of the soldier's isolation as well as his position vis-à-vis the Cuban communities on the island and in Miami so as to suggest a reading focused on the particular impact of the Angolan war and its larger implications for the Cuban exile community—that is, the "war at home" among members of the Cubans on the island and those in the diaspora. This second approach to analysis also brings to light a number of parallels in technique and approach between Alberto's and Cardoso's novels.

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[35] As *Caracol Beach* has a published translation under the same title, page numbers will be listed for the block quotes from each of the Spanish and English editions following their respective selections. For quotes not in block, the page numbers will appear in the parentheses following the quote with the number for the Spanish edition first, followed by a semicolon and the page number for the English edition.

Like Manecas in *Mãe, materno mar*, the soldier in *Caracol Beach* is caught between ideological extremes, represented by the Miami Cuban exiles, evoked as the hegemonic anti-Castro representation of the exiled nation, and the island that the soldier has abandoned for uncertain reasons. Any political criticism of the official Cuban government is implied only in terms of the involvement in the war, as it is the trauma that the soldier suffers that leads him to isolate himself from any possible human contact. In this way, he serves as a sort of negative reflection of Cardoso's protagonist Manecas- while Manecas finds himself immersed in layers upon layers of unfamiliar cultural practices through the forced proximity with unfamiliar others on a long train voyage, the soldier increasingly cuts himself off from those around him. His isolation is represented from the macro-level of the nation/ nation in exile axis of Havana-Miami to the micro personal level of his pet dog, his only constant companion, whom he constantly threatens to turn out. Manecas' escape from the chaos of the final train ride and the evangelical prophet's grandiose entrance into Luanda, with the thousands who he finally influences has its parodic inverse reflection in the soldier's kidnapping the group of teenagers—his forced community—in order to incite them to kill him. However, he ends up causing the deaths of two of the young people in addition to his own.

The narrator's cinematic techniques—close and long 'shots,' dialogue-driven narrative, and detailed description of the scenes—also includes periodic 'flashbacks' in which the soldier's background is slowly unveiled in such a way so as to provide explanation for his present mental condition. One such flashback, to the beginning of the soldier's exile in Florida, positions him as ideologically 'outside' both the Florida exiles

and the island, heightening the effects of his cultural estrangement, and amplifying the extreme isolation that lead to his death. The narrator recounts that upon his arrival in Florida, the soldier, overcome with nostalgia for the island left behind, immersed himself in the community of "hombres y mujeres azotados por el recuerdo de un país que habían decidido reinventar calle a calle [men and women flogged by their recollection of a country that they were determined to reinvent street by street]" (54; 35). The irony of the metaphorical and literal recreation of recipes, dress and pastimes from the island has its reflections in the political dogmatism that the soldier sees reflected in the exile community: "al soldado no le gustaba hablar de política y esa apatía por lo que sus compatriotas llamaban el futuro de la nación acabó por excomulgarlo de la colmena… el soldado se atrevió a criticar en público a uno de los líderes del exilio… y sus comentarios le merecieron para siempre una cruz en la lista de confiables. [the soldier… did not like to talk about politics, and his apathy regarding what his compatriots called the nation's future ended up excommunicating him from the hive… the soldier dared to publicly criticize one of the expatriot leaders… and his remarks earned him a permanent cross next to his name on the list of those who could be trusted]" (55; 36).

The ironic portrayal of the operations of the Castroist government is the subtext of this description of the exile community. The recreation of the island extends to the ideological orthodoxy required for membership in the community, including the intolerance of dissent under threat of expulsion. Thus the soldier is multiply exiled: his has lost his friends to the war, lost his *patria* in exile, and lost the hope of community in his "excommunication" for heterodoxy among his exiled compatriots. As such, the

political divisions that create such communities are reproduced on either side of the geographical and political divide, and have the reduplicating effect of excluding the soldier from their folds. The soldier's additional alienation as a result of the war trauma experienced in the service of internationalist defense—a counter-discourse to the exile community's claim to promote the "future of the nation"—places him outside of the global circulation of political communitary boundaries that echoes his suicidal tendencies. That is, his suicidal drive is narrated as an inevitable result of his failure to "integrate"—losing his war companions in Angola in the army's failed military enterprise, losing his contact with the Cuban nation-state, and losing the specter-state in the Miami exile community.

The soldier's story of his war experiences and his personal past as well as his current living situation and the cause for his madness are narrated through his nightmares, imagination, and memories- sources for narrative material that serve to point to the inconclusive, subjective and nonetheless powerful mechanisms that make up "imagined communities". As a metaphor of this process, the personal loss of his companions is linked to the loss of the *patria*, the homeland, represented in the soldier's trailer through the Cuban flag on the wall, on which the red triangle is suggested to be drawn with "su sangre, pobre cubano [the soldier's own blood, after all, poor Cuban]" (231; 180), the same way that he tattoos on his arm the names of his dead "comarades-in-arms" to record them in his blood. The names, as a later passage reveals, are the ironic reflection of war medals, trophies permanently pinned to Beto's body to commemorate "heroic" deeds and "enemies" eliminated, but which in the context of the soldier's permanent state of

suffering and loss of community point to the empty signifiers that such war trophies represent.

When Beto kidnaps the three teenagers on the night of their high school graduation celebration, his actions reflect on a smaller scale his experiences as a soldier. After Beto's company of soldiers is killed in a mine blast and he has their names tattooed on his arm, he claims to the teenagers that they represent the names of those he has assassinated. As a symbol of the "trophies" awarded him in the war, the list of names alternately represents a memorial to those lost and an indictment of the human price paid through military operations. Adding to Beto's list, two of the teenagers die in the final scenes of the novel as they hunt for Beto after he has forced them to commit violent acts against others under the threat of harm done to their friend Laura. As one of the boys, Martin, assaults a milk delivery truck driver in order to obtain his vehicle for his search for Beto, he realizes that he has become like the soldier: "De lo que se trataba ahora, ahora que la cobardía acababa de proporcionarle un nombre para grabar en el panteón de su antebrazo, era conseguir que alguien le afileteara en la camisa una última medalla: la de una bala [The question now, now that cowardice had just given him a name to engrave in the pantheon of his arm, was who would pin a final decoration on his shirt: the medal of a bullet]" (288; 227). And yet, the novel points to the experience of war as a process through which the absurdity of the defense the state is revealed, and in this "defense" of the construction of nation the people it defines and represents are destroyed. This process is repeated through the many interactions of the soldier with those who encounter him in the days and hours leading to his suicide, and are repeated and metaphorized in the deaths

of the teenagers Tom and Martin, who pursue Laura to the soldier's trailer after she is kidnapped. As the tussle over their shared attraction to Laura, the narrator presents a kind of "voice-over" aside to reflect on the situation of war:

> Y mientras Tom y Martin se empujan entre los coches, se abrazan, forcejean, se debilitan y enloquecen, decir a voz en cuello que los verdaderos culpables de la masacre no aparecen en esta novela porque antes se las ingeniaron para mandar a otros a las primeras líneas de fuego, a la batalla estúpida de la política, para que vuelen en pedazos y ellos puedan decir en las tribunas que el pueblo ha cumplido su glorioso deber con la historia. ¿Pero tendrá sentido? ¿De qué sirve? Tom y Martin no leerán este libro: si existe el documento, la ficción de los hechos, es porque ellos no contaron con el escudo de las letras, oraciones, párrafos, parapetos de palabras. La única manera de cambiar el destino sería mintiendo y ni la mentira podría amararlos: la muerte también es una dictadora. ¡Con qué paciencia va cosiendo la mortaja! La vida es una suma de casualidades. De equívocos. (284-85)

> As Tom and Martin struggle among the cars and embrace, push, weaken and go mad, would it be better to say at the top of one's voice that those truly responsible for the massacre do not appear in this novel because they first arranged to send others to the front lines, to the mindless battle of politics, so that others would be blown to pieces and they could say in public forums that the people fulfilled their glorious obligation to history? But does that make sense? What good would it

do? Tom and Martin won't read this book: if the document exists, this fiction about the facts, it is because they could not rely on the shield of letters, sentences, paragraphs, parapets of words. The only way to change destiny would be to lie, and not even a lie, would save them: death, too, is a tyrant. How patiently she weaves the cloth and sews the winding sheet! Life is a totality of coincidences. And accidents. (224)

The narrator's constant references to the construction of the novel, as well as his commentary on the plot and the characters, reflect Cardoso's use of a collective first-person narrative voice, and help to distance the reader from the internal dynamics of the novel, opening a space for the narrative voice to universalize the situation. That is, the exaggerated and almost farcical way in which the soldier's war trauma sets off a chain reaction that leads to the deaths of the two high school students points to the devastating effects that state sacrifice of the lives of its military troops has deep and long-lasting effects that are not contained by political alliance, national boundaries or generational membership.

The story of the soldier's attempts to commit suicide culminates in the intersections between his final night of life and the post-graduation celebration of the group of high school students. Through various run-ins with the soldier, Beto ends up forcing the boys, Martin and Tom, to commit assault, to destroy the car of a bar patron who has wronged him and to kill a passerby's dog; he finally kidnaps the third student, Laura, by handcuffing her to himself and taking her back to his trailer. The collective responses of the three teenagers, which further mirror the reactions to the situation of the

police chief, Sam Ramos, reflect the multi-faceted portrayal of the soldier's suffering. The crimes the boys commit at Beto's direction are a series of actions that occur in a comically short time period—5 hours, according to the chronology of events the author supplies at the end of the novel—and reproduce the life-long metamorphosis of the soldier from young patriot to mentally ill, suicidal veteran. In a parallel fashion, Laura's disgust and fear at being forcibly detained by the soldier turn to sympathy and an impulse to protect him as he slowly reveals to her the trauma that has lead to his suffering.

The logical gap the narrator identifies between those who are "blown to pieces" and those "truly responsible for the massacre in this novel" is not strictly a binary divide between guilty politicians and innocent soldiers blindly serving their country. Rather, the parallel situations that the narrator creates between the literal war in Angola and the violence that the soldier incites Martin and Tom to create an ironic reading of those complicit with a "mad" military leadership and the absurdity of armed conflict's potential to create peace. Under the threat of harm to Laura, as the soldier forces them to destroy the car of the passing offending bar patron, the boys experience an emotional change; they unexpectedly learn to enjoy the violence of their task: "Una hora después, Tom confesaría a Martin que en ese momento sintió un placer inesperado, como si Satanás en persona le hubiese dicho qué hacer… Laura los oyó resoplar, ahogados en adrenalina. Martin dejó escapar un contraproducente chillido de júbilo [An hour later, Tom admitted to Martin that he had felt an unexpected pleasure, as if Satan in person had told him what to do… Laura heard them panting, choking on adrenaline. Martin let out a counterproductive whoop of jubilation]" (152-53; 116). This pleasure escalates at the end

of the novel, when Martin initiates of his own accord other violent encounters that mimic what he has been made to do earlier. After being forced to kill the pet dog of a resident of the neighborhood, he kicks the soldier's pet dog of his own accord; the violence of his and Tom's robbery of a prostitute reverberate when they violently beat a milkman in order to steal his truck, and then after Tom's accidental death by falling on a spear, Martin confronts the soldier, and becomes a metonymized version of him. As he slowly becomes conscious of the world continuing around him as he confronts the soldier after Tom has died, "El reordenamiento de la realidad no sirvió de consuelo porque a esa altura de las circunstancias el mejor alumno del Instituto Emerson había perdido el juicio para siempre. Estaba fuera del mundo: la demencia es una forma de extravío… El tigre saltó del árbol [The reordering of reality brought no consolation because by this time the top student at the Emerson Institute had lost his mind forever. He was not in this world: madness is a kind of wandering… the tiger sprang out of the tree]" (305-06; 241).

The language used to describe Martin's decline into a parallel madness to the soldier is reinforced by the appearance of the symbolic Bengal tiger, in this passage in which the voices of the two characters are fused and confused. The "reordering of reality" to which Martin is subject describes the constant "reordering" process through which the soldier passes as well—his capture with the dead bodies of his soldier buddies in the jungle, his rehabilitation in a Portuguese hospital, his repatriation in Florida because of his fear of returning to Cuba, and his gradual assumption of his commander Lázaro Samá's identity—all fail to resolve or mitigate his mental suffering. Similarly, Martin's final arrival at his the junkyard where the soldier lives in order to rescue Laura

has the ironic consequence both of Tom's death and his own; when a trigger-happy young policeman mows both him and the soldier down, the narrator describes it as "una derrota que en su caso podía considerarse una victoria [a defeat that in his case could be considered a victory]" (325; 256).

The reverberations of the soldier's suffering work both to cause the violent deaths of Martin and Tom, and also as a tool of reconciliation between the Sherriff Sam Ramos and his cross-dressing son Nelson/ Mandy. Ramos had previously served as a soldier who was placed in charge of Beto Milanés upon his capture after the mine explosion, found him a place to live and a job in Caracol Beach, and now finds himself in charge of apprehending him for kidnapping Laura. Both Sam and, secretly, an adolescent Mandy, come to know "Beto" through the war notebook that makes up alternating chapters of the novel. However, this literary representation provides an ironic contrast to the parallel constructed story that the soldier lives through his assumption of his lieutenant Lázaro Samá's identity, further reflected in the way in which he imagines the Bengal tiger. While it is to the journal that Sam Ramos and Mandy point both in order to maintain their sympathy with Beto as well as to point to a "truth" that sustains them—the frequently repeated phrase that "not loving anyone is an immoral act" (243, etc.), the text fails to "reestablish order" in such a way that Beto can "order" his life towards health and redemption. Rather, in his inevitable death brought about by the "ordered" narrative is in face orchestrated by his partial assumption of Lázaro Samá's life, especially as represented in his initiation into *santería*.

The soldier's relationship with Lázaro Samá suggests the way both that the war created surrogate familial ties, and emphasizes the way in which those ties are traumatically ripped apart by an inevitable violence. Lázaro and Beto meet each other on the ship as they cross the ocean on their way to Angola, and Lázaro eventually initiates Beto into *santería*. Extending the metaphor to the political, social and affective realms, the surrogacy of Beto as son and Lázaro as father—each finding in the other a lost child or parent—the novel points to the ways in which political policy disrupts the national communities, resulting in a collective wound which has no cure. This situation is suggested by Lázaro's loss of his biological son before he is sent to war, when the teenager is killed in a mine explosion as he tries to cross the land separating sovereign Cuba from the U.S. controlled military base at Guantánamo Bay. Lázaro cannot reconcile his son's death: "¿Por qué se marchaba a la Yuma? ¿Por qué abandonaba a los suyos? Ésa es la pregunta que Lázaro se hace una y otra vez. Quién sabe. Era hijo de Ochosí. Vivían más o menos bien. No le interesaba la política, sólo las fiestas. Gusano, lo que se dice gusano, no parecía. [Why did he go over to Yankeelandia? Why was he leaving his people? That's the question Lázaro asks himself over and over again. Who knows? He was a child of Ochosi. They lived pretty well. He wasn't interested in politics, only in parties. A worm[36], the kind who runs away from Cuba, a real worm, he didn't seem to be one of them]" (185; 143). The familial trauma made real by political disputes finds a temporary and spectral solution in the constructed microcosm of the state-family in the

[36] *Gusano* is one of the very derisive terms used in post-Revolutionary Cuba to describe and disparage the "contrarrevolucionarios" who abandon the island.

military squadron which Lázaro leads, and in which Beto finds his absent father-figure in Lázaro. However, the violence with which the son is lost is repeated in the attack which causes the deaths of every member besides Beto, and Beto's subsequent surrogate "family"—Sam Ramos, the Haitian bar owner who takes him in and gives him a job upon his arrival at Caracol Beach, and his "son" / "double" Martin- fail to recuperate his lost familial connections.

The resurgence of practices of *santería* in the text signal the ritual act of recovery and healing that is never consecrated. Lázaro is the one who reveals Beto to be a son of Yemayá, the mother-goddess of the seas, syncretized with Our Lady of Regla, the Catholic appearance of a black Marian figure in the fourth century, whose image is celebrated around Cuba. As Beto vacillates between his own identity and assuming that of Lázaro in the years he spends in Florida, he alternately looks to his *santa* Yemayá and to Lázaro's saint, Babalú Ayé, who both causes and cures illness. If, for Beto, the literal war in Angola symbolizes his internal "war" caused by separation from his community and his nation, and who in turn represents all Cubans exiled by a divisive political system, his assuming Lázaro's identity to pray to Babalú Ayé points to a ritual healing process for the "sickness" that has infected the whole Cuban family. In a passage that mixes selections of the prayer with Beto's internal thoughts, he imagines a procession following Babalú Ayé[37],

> a cierta distancia, callados, respetuosos, fieles, patriotas, miles de cubanos en

[37] The image recalls the documentary *La promesa* (Julio Ramos, 1995) about the syncretistic celebrations of San Lázaro/ Babalú Ayé in Cuba.

solemne procesión, hombres y mujeres, niños y ancianos, pecadores y arrepentidos, vagabundos, leprosos, minusválidos, mongólicos, cojos, ciegos, mudos, tontos, diabéticos, desesperados, tullidos, tuertos, tuberculosos, sordos, lelos, paralíticos, mancos, tartamudos, cardíacos, desahuciados, asmáticos, sidosos, paranoicos, solitarios, melancólicos, neuróticos, locos, locos, locos, cientos y cientos de pobres locos, algunos incurables como él, Beto Milanés. (237)

[at a certain distance, quiet, respectful, loyal, patriotic, thousands of Cubans in solemn procession, men and women, young and old, sinners and penitents, vagabonds, lepers, the maimed, the Mongoloid, the lame, the blind, the mute, the half-witted, the diabetic, the desperate, the disabled, the one-eyed, the tubercular, the deaf, the moronic, the paralytic, the handless, the tongue-tied, the weak-hearted, the hopeless, the asthmatic, the AIDS-infected, the paranoid, the solitary, the melancholic, the neurotic, the mad, mad, mad, hundreds and hundreds of poor madmen, some incurable, like him, Beto Milanés]. (185)

But for Beto, no salvation comes to pass. In a passage that performs the processions every December of devotees to worship Babalú Ayé in Cuba, he imagines a procession of diseased and disabled bodies, in which he includes himself, who come to seek redemption for a fractured and "diseased" Cuban nation. The "disease" is represented on Beto's own body, through the tattoos of the names of his fellow soldiers who are killed in the attack that leaves him the only survivor. Like the permanent tattoos,

Beto is unable to rid himself of the madness that his situation belies, until finally, at his death, "Yemayá le tiró del cabello para que alzara la cabeza y recibiera la muerte con dignidad [Yemayá pulled his hair so he would raise his head and receive death with dignity]" (325; 256). Nonetheless, the notion of "dignity" in his death is an ironic one. Imagining himself back in battle, Beto's death is far from dignified, and in fact serves as an ironic reminder of the irreparable damage is done to the national body through ideologically-driven war and exile. The dead body of Tom, who accidentally impales himself on a metal spike while chasing Beto through the junkyard, further drives home the violent and useless reverberations of a conflict in defense of "patriotic duty" in a context entirely removed from discernible meaning.

In both of the novels, the abuses of corrupt political machines are refracted through the bodies of the characters. In both cases, the notion of a specter-state, the nation-in-crisis that must borrow the "language of the past" in order to make itself intelligible (Derrida 136) take the forms of proxy-national configurations whose histories are repeated and reified in the physical suffering of the characters. For Beto Milanés, the experience as a soldier in the Angolan war who loses all his compatriots turns into an ironic rendering of citizenship- his losses provoke a permanent schism of the patria, resulting not only the death of his friends but his imagining that he has betrayed his country and his eventual settling in the United States. This phenomenon is symbolized in his madness, and recorded through the tattoos of the names of his fellow soldiers, an ironic "war memorial" on his arm. Beto's experience dramatizes the reiteration of state-sanctioned violence, of young people sent do die in the "name of politics". Through

Beto's kidnapping of the teenagers and forcing them to commit violent acts, Alberto's novel suggests that the terms under which states conscript and sacrifice the lives of their citizens as a type of kidnapping as well—one that, under the notion of defending sovereignty, results in the fracturing of the imagined national body.

Alberto ends the novel with the image of an unnamed cemetery employee whose final word needed to finish his crossword puzzle only occurs to him as he is cremating the carcass of the pet dog killed by Tom and Martin at Beto's orders: clemency. Like the diseased bodies expelled from the nation in a list that recalls the legend of Fidel Castro's emptying the prisons and sanitariums of "undesirables" during the 1980 Mariel boat exodus, the mad and marginalized characters of Alberto's novel plead for the reader's clemency as well. The novel, in its ritual suggestion of a "healed whole" through the sheriff Sam Ramos's reunification with his transgender daughter Mandy at the end of the novel nonetheless leaves open the question of a possible "reunified" nation. If Beto's body serves as a textual metaphor for the divided Cuban *patria*, however tortured, his death leaves open the question with which he begins his last diary entry at the end of the novel: "¿Será ésta la última página que escribo? [Will this be the last page I write?]" (324; 255).

CONCLUSIONS

In both Cardoso's and Alberto's novels, the notion of a national body remains central, even as it is criticized. Cardoso's narration of the process through which the train passengers and then the citizens of Luanda's allegiances are fractured among the various pastors, each offering their own miraculous cures, reflects Angola's political fracturing

into regional parties whose disagreements turn into violence, much like the first fight in the beginning of the novel that results in four dead bodies. The Prophet's rise and the people's euphoric response to a leader who they fleetingly believe will solve Angola's problems dissolves when they discover that the Prophet, in secret consultation with his supposed rival ministers, has secreted away the millions of monetary donations the people have turned over to them. And yet the novel, unlike Alberto's, ends with a completely localized space for hope. Just as Beto's crimes bring Sam Ramos and his daughter Mandy to reconciliation, the Prophet's disappearance simply provokes a dejected populace to return home, after which Manecas is able to "return to the sea". The suggestion of a cyclical and ritual new beginning leaves the reader with a notion of hope for a future; if the collective narrator's voice draws the readers in to the national body, the "maternal waters" suggest both the potential for a new beginning as well as a re-writing of the history recorded in the novel.

While the collective narrative voice in *Mãe, materno mar* suggests that literature still acts as a means of mediation among the voices of political subjects, Alberto's fractured narrative techniques that culminate in miscommunication and total alienation no longer privilege the literary text in this way. In *Caracol Beach,* there is no redemption for Beto; as he wonders whether his final page will be his last, he is entirely subsumed by the state. His death does not bring him liberation, but rather reinforces the effect of the specter-state to govern his body; his abandonment of his diaries signaling the end of the novel itself point to a cynical conclusion about the reverberating effects of Beto's experience as a soldier. In fact, the reproduction of wartime violence in the actions of the

teenagers, Beto's displacement by both the *isleños* and the exiles suggest a configuration akin to Mbembe's "global mobility" of violence. Mbembe's configuration of a modern state which no longer maintains a hegemony on the right to kill (Mbembe "Necropolitics") helps to illuminate Alberto's vision of a "war machine" that was once in the service of a state, but now operates outside of state boundaries and serves only to reproduce itself.

Both Cardoso's and Alberto's novels question the terms of relationality between subjects. By focusing on notions of the national refracted through the legacy of a violent conflict that fragments the national community, the two novels discussed here turn to the ambiguous space suggested by an ironic rendering of what the novels portray as failed or failing political projects. In these two novels, the presence of an explicitly revolutionary ideology is almost inexistent; the historical context is left up to the reader to fill in. Using irony as a tool to point to these failure both opens the space for the reader to perform this intervention, and also leaves a space open for the characters' relations that slip outside the demands of national discourse to provide a model of community formation among the subjects for whom grand ideological narratives have little continued relevance.

Conclusions

At a national literary conference early in 2011, I gave a presentation on religion, politics and power in Boaventura Cardoso's *Mãe, materno mar*. My analysis focused on the turbulence of the post-war era in Angola that is created allegorically through the juxtaposition of the many-voiced collective narrator and the politically and economically exploitive figure of the Prophet. During the question-and-answer session, an audience member asked, "So is there no hope for Angola?" The question took me aback. I had not considered Cardoso's novel a hopeless indictment of post-independence national fantasy, even in its criticism of national and international opportunism in a fractured political and economic entity. In later contemplation, I realized that perhaps my analysis had not emphasized the narrative affection or notions of local solidarity that the novel transmits as a counter-current to the critical voice. In the context of a comparison with Cuban works, I realized that this type of question is less frequently proposed about Cuba in these terms, despite a series of negative and even apocalyptic visions of the island nation from authors such as Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Reinaldo Arenas and Virgilio Piñera. Despite the prevalence of discourses of *desencanto* surrounding the Special Period, or what José Quiroga calls a collective "mourning" for an "imaginative death" of the nation both on and off the island (Quiroga 203), disappointment with revolutionary promise, in Cuban letters, is less frequently attached to a very questioning of a future for Cuba at all.

The notion of disappointment that this dissertation has attempted to describe points to a literary space that expresses criticism and even melancholy with the late-

twentieth century histories of Cuba and Angola. Yet, disappointment posits a productive engagement with discussions of national and trans-national community formation through literature. In so doing, it attempts to extract these narratives from strict polarities of nationalistic or counter-revolutionary pull. In drawing from trans-national connections forged through revolutionary alliance, these novels of disappointment suggest, therefore, connections and parallels that serve to illuminate common currents in the particular contours of this disappointment in each novels geopolitical context.

This dissertation has traced how Cuban and Angolan novels published in the final decades of the twentieth century engage with the political and artistic projects promoted by and through the post-revolutionary socialist-aligned political systems. The dissertation sustains that there are a collection of textual practices that insert themselves into the official "orthodox" historiographic and literary debates by reconsidering not just historical moments in the past that are central to these debates, but also reference how these moments are written and read from an official point of view. By employing tactics of ironic citation, parody and anachronism, these works not only comment upon official readings of history and demands of post-revolutionary literature, but they also reveal "silences," to use Rolph-Trouillot's term, in the literary corpus and in the experiences of Angolan and Cuban people that these alternative corpuses represent. Through revision of official discourses, they present an alternative reading of present subjects' interactions with the past.

These practices, which together I have termed "poetics of disappointment," allow an intervention into the discussions surrounding both the production and the criticism of

contemporary Cuban and Angolan literatures from a variety of political perspectives. On one hand, these works recall the monumental events that the Cuban Revolution and Angolan independence represented, evoking a collective optimism and sense of community forged among *pueblos*/ *povos* in the processes of decolonization and promoting movements for social justice. On the other hand, the novels analyzed in the preceding chapters point out the limits of programmatic interpretations of post-revolutionary history. Demonstrating positions of discomfort with the notions of messianic immanence, idealized racial synthesis and the aftermaths of violence and displacement that official sources rarely document, these novels privilege literary creation as a way of negotiating this disappointment.

In Chapter One, I trace the historical ties established between Cuban and Angolan intellectuals from the 1960s forward. The chapter suggests that parallel considerations for decolonization and socialist solidarity in the global South also point to a possible resemblance in Cuban and Angolan literature of disappointment with revolutionary promise. Chapter 1 concludes that as the rhetorical justification for "sameness" in socialist solidarity falls away, a notion of respect in *difference*, what Glissant terms "opacity" can still serve as a productive model for placing literature of disappointment in conversation.

Chapter Two explores the ideological challenges that post-revolutionary literature takes on, through representations of Cuba's colonial and neo-colonial pasts, and Angola's five hundred years of Portuguese colonization. This chapter looks at works written by central figures to the new revolutionary regimes, which straddle engagement with the

promise of social and political change, and questioning of how that change is being carried about. The readings proposed of Alejo Carpentier's *La consagración de la primavera* (1978) and Manuel Rui's *Memória de mar* (1980) point to how the novels situate revolution as the result of historical processes set in place by past abuses under colonial and neo-colonial rule, and yet undermine narratives that leads axiomatically to utopian socialist futures. Focusing on the temporal games in which both of the texts engage, as well as the way they ironically represent unidirectional social-realist literature, the chapter suggests that these texts occupy an ambiguous position that neither overtly rejects nor fully accepts the direction of aesthetic politics in 1970s Cuba and Angola. The two novels thus map the type of critical engagement of literature of disappointment that takes up the revolutionary demand for intersections of the political and artistic spheres, and yet points to how these intersections close out creative engagement with the direction of revolution.

Chapter Three takes on the racial politics debated through and after revolution in Cuba and Angola, dismantling simplistic notions of idealized racial mixing as a symbol of post-revolutionary utopia. Both Reinaldo Arenas' *La loma del ángel* (1987) and José Eduardo Agualusa's *Nação crioula* (1997) question the implications of coloniality and imperialism in proposals of racial hybridity. They suggest that these notions draw their genealogies from notions of "whitening" that sought to neutralize and erase evidence of racial violence in Cuba's and Angola's pasts. *La loma del ángel* dismantles notions of textual and political authority, drawing explicit parallels between nineteenth-century authoritarian *criollo* rule and twentieth-century revolutionary authorities, proposing a

multi-voiced literary text as an antidote to the limited state-sanctioned literary corpus. Agualusa's novel ironizes depoliticized notions of *criolidade* as a post-independence model of nationhood, and thus questions the intersections of a colonial history with post-colonial literary creation.

In Chapter Four, my analysis of Boaventura Cardoso's *Mãe, materno mar* (2001) and Eliseo Alberto's *Caracol Beach* (1998) asks how communities reconfigure themselves after the violence of war and displacement has fractured national and international unity made the belief in grand ideological narratives impossible. While the communities that had come together to celebrate the promise of a prophetic deliverer return to their homes "disappointed" at the end of the novel, *Mãe materno mar* does not evoke this disappointment as an absolute despair, but rather as a slow process of negotiation with the difficulties of post-war reconstruction. Alberto's conclusions, while focusing on a veteran who is both mentally and physically destroyed by his disillusionment following war service and exile, similarly call for "clemency" from the divisive and destructive divisions that political polarization has introduced into the Cuban national family.

In their ironic engagement with the discourses of history and revolution, these novels do not displace one national or historical vision with another, but insist on an overlap where distinct voices and perspectives come into contact with each other. In so doing, they displace notions of collective consensus on the interpretation of the past or on the direction of the literary future upon which the politics of revolutionary orthodoxy are based. Literature of disappointment carries in it multiple consciousnesses, in which the

experience of disappointment creates the possibility for new kinds of literary knowledge. Carried within this new kind of knowledge is an insistence on the "opacity" among different kinds of communities, a concept which for Glissant circumvents homogenizing identity politics that insist on synthesis and "sameness".

Analyzing these Cuban and Angolan works together points to questions of how contemporary novelists, critics and historians will remember the years of Cuban participation in the Angolan War, and the decades of intellectual exchange organized around similar constructions of revolution. Mapping a literature of disappointment points the way toward the next phase of critical inquiry into the web of trans-national connections forged through Cuba's and Angola's historical ties. However, our insistence on the historical ties developed among political and intellectual leaders of Cuba and Angola during and following the years of military allegiance begs the question of whether these two bodies of work, this "literature of disappointment," is not simply another set of examples of a broad and at times homogenized application of the term post-colonial literature, with its attendant focuses on violent histories of European colonization and neo-colonization, techniques of cultural mixing and linguistic innovation, and preoccupation with the direction of post-colonial communities or nations and post-colonial literatures and cultural expression after official colonization has ended.

This dissertation has tried to emphasize not only the inheritance and history of colonial occupation as a concern for the historical conditions that the novels take on, but additionally a concern for post-revolutionary political programs that reproduce Hegelian-inspired historical synthesis and dictate literary form allied to this notion of historical

synthesis, in its ironizing of historiographic discourses, historical novels and the assumption that literature reflects "reality". By ironizing the history-making process, or the ways in which specific local histories have been written and explained, these novels of disappointment reference and yet refuse to reproduce unified notions of the direction of revolution or prescriptions for literary styles and textual practices.

Indeed, this is literature that comes out of what Elleke Boehmer terms worlds "fissured, distorted, and made incredible by cultural displacement… societies which have been repeatedly unsettled by invasion, occupation, and political corruption" (Boehmer 235), and thus literature that reflects the effects of these historical conditions in its denouncement of unrealized utopian visions (Carpentier and Rui), the reproduction of racist notions of cultural mixing incorporated into contemporary national foundations (Arenas and Agualusa) and political abuses and violence in the post-revolutionary era (Alberto and Cardoso). To help us define the "new type of literary knowledge" that literature of disappointment evidences, it helps to return to Glissant's notion of *créolisation* as a characteristic not particular to post-colonial spaces such as the Caribbean, but in evidence the world over. Experience with political corruption, violence and cultural clash, as well as the creativity and creolized practices that come out of it are not limited to what we call post-colonial nations. Thus the insistence on the political specificities of Cuba and Angola's convergences in artistic and literary spheres are all the more necessary. Recognition of proximate colonial histories, marking the revolutionary moments in Cuba and Angola as points of departure from neo-colonial and colonial rule, serves as a basis for comparison, but do not collapse the Cuban and Angolan experiences

into sameness. By focusing on localized histories, yet reaching across the Atlantic to use these histories as the basis for *relation* with others, literature of disappointment recognizes similar colonial pasts and yet does not fall into into fatalistic determinism that anticipates contemporary "states of emergency". It thus avoids homogenizing notions of postcolonial sameness. By exemplifying horizontal *relation*, similar but not the same, as a source for creativity, these novels are able to engage the complexity of the socio-political situations they evoke, and thus propose a similar demand for relation through a search for specific modes of contact among cultures that appreciates and recognizes differences.

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